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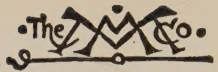

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FIVE MINUTES DAILY
WITH
LUTHER

Daily Lessons from the Writings of Martin Luther

By
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ST. LOUIS, MO.

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PREFACE

Recently a prominent writer on religion urged the churches to stop for a moment and look back. Properly understood, this advice is certainly worth considering. Not everything is worthless that lies in the past. We have not taken along all the treasures of faith and godliness which were garnered by busy hands in the bygone ages. Great men lived in those heroic times; giants of vision, of trust in Christ, and of loyalty to God. Their message still rings in our ears with telling effect. Their loyalty to God is to this day a beacon light to eager hearts seeking after truth. The past is after all not so far removed from the present, and the future, in spite of its offer of greater insight, deeper scholarship, and more extensive facts, can never disengage itself from the good and the true of the past.

One of the needs of Christendom to-day is a revival of faith, for faith only can make the world whole. Scholarship and learning without faith will never lead God's people out of the gloom of uncertainty to the light-flooded promised land of communion with God. We need greater faith in the divine-human Christ, in the omnipotence of His Word, and in the efficacy of His vicarious work. We must listen again to the divine Teacher from Heaven, and give his Gospel a chance to change and recreate our hearts.

Dr. Martin Luther was, as many are convinced, a great teacher of the Christian Church; but he was first of all a great learner in Christ's school. His message was the abiding Gospel of the ages concerning the Redeemer of the world. He centered his whole message in the divine facts of *sola scriptura, sola gratia, sola*

fide. He wanted no other source and norm of faith than the Bible; no other way to the Father but the way by grace through faith in Jesus. Luther was a consecrated minister of Jesus Christ. Trusting in the grace of God for Christ's sake and standing firmly upon the immovable rock of the infallible Word of God, he preached the Gospel of redemption with a conviction against which the gates of hell could not prevail.

Luther, the devout preacher of Christ and eager student of God's Word, speaks in the selections which in this book have been arranged for daily devotional reading. Especially his Gospel testimony is of weighty importance. For this reason the main lessons were taken from his commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians, that master-defense of justification by grace through faith in Christ; from the First Epistle of St. Peter, in which he expounds to his readers the infallibility of God's Word; from the Second Epistle of St. Peter and from Jude, in which he warns against the two chief dangers of the Christian faith; namely, false doctrine and unholy life. To these selections were added expositions of various psalms, of the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, and other passages, in which the message of salvation is characteristically set forth.

In order to reproduce, to some extent, the rugged strength of Luther's language, such translations were followed, in the main, as in style comported with the original. The compiler is indebted to *Translation of Luther's Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians,* by Edwinus London; *Translation of Familiar Discourses of Luther,* by Capt. Henry Bell; *Translation of the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude,* by E. H. Gillett; *Select Work of Martin Luther,* by Rev. Henry Cole. Insufficiencies have been supplied by original translations from standard editions. Since of necessity the selections had to be brief, much had to be omitted, and emphasis was laid upon the sense, rather than upon the literal translation of the original.

While the book has been designed primarily for devotional reading, and has therefore been arranged in

daily lessons, it may be used also as a reference work on Luther's principal teachings. Such a reference work may be desirable. For this reason two indexes were added, a subject index, and an index for the passages treated. May the book serve many readers who are friends of the Savior whom Luther preached, and of the Bible which Luther loved.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER.

St. Louis, Missouri
October, 1925

January 1

I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. *Matt. xxii. 32.*

* * *

In this text Christ powerfully shows the resurrection of the dead; for if there were no hope of the resurrection of the dead, nor of another and better world after this short and miserable life, wherefore does God offer to be our God, to give us all that is necessary and healthful for us, and in the end to deliver us out of all trouble, both temporal and spiritual? To what purpose is it that we hear His Word and believe in Him? What does it serve us that we sigh and cry to Him in our anguish and need, that we wait with patience for His comfort and salvation, for His grace and benefits which He shows us in Christ? Why do we praise and thank Him for the same? Why are we daily in danger, and suffer ourselves to be persecuted and slain for the sake of Christ's Word, which we teach and hold for our greatest treasure? Because through His Word the everlasting and merciful God talks and deals with us concerning our future life, where we shall be when we depart from this life, and He gives unto us His Son, our Savior, who delivers us from sin and death, and has purchased for us everlasting righteousness, life, and salvation. Therefore we are sure that we do not die like the beasts that have no understanding; but that all who die in Christ shall through Him be raised again to everlasting life.

He lives and grants me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death;
He lives, my mansion to prepare;
He lives to bring me safely there.

January 2

> When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction. *Ps. lxxiii. 16–18.*

* * *

Why does God give honor, health of body, fine children, a life of jollity and pleasure to desperate wretches, but contrariwise, suffers the good and godly people who are highly enlightened to remain in calamity, danger, and necessity all the days of their lives? God acts in this respect like an honest and godly father, that fain would bring up his son in the knowledge and fear of the true faith, in order that he might have joy in him later on, and might convey unto him all the treasure which he has gathered together. He chastens and scourges him more and oftener than he does his servant. He allows the disobedient servant to go a while unpunished, to use his wilfulness, without seeming to regard it; but in the meantime he thinks: Well, you shall not continue doing so; and when the time comes, he thrusts him out of the house. Jeremiah gives us such a picture when he says: "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal treacherously? . . . . Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter." Their wickedness shall bring them to an evil end. But God suffers the godly to be chastened and beaten when they are secure and unthankful to Him, that thereby they should be moved, and in a manner, forced to turn themselves unto Him, to seek help and comfort from Him through Christ.

> In all my ways Thy hand I own,
> Thy ruling Providence I see;
> O help me still my course to run,
> And still direct my path to Thee.

January 3

> Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish . . . . Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. *Ps. lxxiii. 7, 12.*

* * *

We believe that God will give us much better things than He gives to the rich, ungodly wretches in this world, to whom He gives an overplus, and the fill of good wine, money, wealth, power, honor, and all things that they would have, or can desire. But the best wealth and treasure, which they do not desire, He denies them; namely, Himself. But he that has not God, let him have what he will; he is, notwithstanding, more miserable than was Lazarus, who lay at the rich man's gate and was starved to death. It will go even so with them, as it went with the glutton, that they everlastingly must hunger and want, and shall not have in all their power so much as the least drop of water. If then the almighty God in such a manner heaps blessings upon His worst enemies and blasphemers, with all manner of temporal goods and wealth, and gives to some also kingdoms, principalities, etc., then may we, who are His children, easily conceive what He will give unto us, who for His sake must suffer. We know what He has already given to us: His only-begotten Son, and with Him has bestowed all things upon us, so that through Him we are God's children and heirs of His celestial treasure, and co-heirs with Christ, according to hope.

Jesus, priceless Treasure,
Source of purest pleasure,
Truest Friend to me!
Long my heart hath panted,
Till it well-nigh fainted,
Thirsting after Thee!
Thine I am, O spotless Lamb!
I will suffer naught to hide Thee,
Ask for naught beside Thee.

January 4

> My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee . . . . As they were increased, so they sinned against Me: therefore will I change their glory into shame. *Hosea iv. 6, 7.*

* * *

God is patient and of great goodness in that He can hold His peace and be silent so many hundred years, and suffer the wicked to go so long unpunished. The cause is, which few know, or few, at least, will believe, that God will fearfully punish the blindness of the world, which will not receive the truth that they might be saved, but blaspheme and persecute the same; therefore God sends unto them powerful errors, so that they believe lies. (*II Thess. ii.*). In the time of the Apostles, and long afterwards, the Gospel had its full course in Arabia, in Syria, in Egypt, Asia, Greece, and in other kingdoms. But when the people grew weary of the Gospel, and many sects arose, then came that blasphemous Mahomet, and from that time forward they forsook Christ and worshipped Mahomet. And so it will go in other places, where there is unthankfulness and condemning of the all-saving holy Word which is clearly and purely preached. After the bright shining light there will come fearful darkness. When God wishes to punish a people or kingdom, He first takes away from them good and godly teachers and preachers; He also bereaves them of wise, godly, and honest rulers and counsellors. Then the common people are secure and merry, satisfied to be allowed to go on in wilfulness, caring nothing for the truth and divine doctrine, if they may only live as they please. But then God lays the ax to the root of the tree, and soon cuts it down.

> In these last days of sore distress
> Grant us, dear Lord, true steadfastness,
> That pure we keep, till life is spent,
> Thy holy Word and Sacrament.

January 5

> To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word . . . . Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them. *Isa. lxvi. 2–4.*

* * *

When God is angry with us, delivers us into the hands of our enemies, and sends upon us pestilences, plagues, famine, etc., and thus punishes our sins and vices, nevertheless, so long as He speaks with us through His Word, it is a certain sign of His grace and favor toward us; for "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." But when our people are secure, they hear indeed the Word, but it goes in at one ear and out at the other; they prate much thereof, but no amendment of life nor fruits of the faith follow. As we see before our eyes, every one will be a true Christian, and yet there is no end of caring for the body; wicked covetousness, usury, and other sins go on and flourish. When God through good and godly teachers and preachers then threatens us, and we will not turn and repent, then it is a certain sign that God will shortly take from us His Word and pure doctrine, and will leave us in the darkness of our hearts to walk in our own counsels, as Christ threatened the Jews, and took from them the kingdom of God, and gave it to others that brought forth fruits. God can have long patience when the people are wicked; but when they contemn His Word and persecute the same, then His patience has an end.

A clean heart create in me,
Which in Thee, O God, believeth,
And at the iniquity
Of my sins sincerely grieveth;
And when hours of woe betide me,
In the wounds of Jesus hide me.

January 6

> If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. *I John ii. 1, 2.*

* * *

All righteousness comes originally from God. First He speaks unto us through His Word. He offers unto us His grace and forgiveness of our sins through Christ. So he spoke to Adam and Eve in Paradise soon after their fall, when they had been received through the serpent. Then God laid upon them a grievous punishment, but at once also comforted them and promised Christ, who should crush the serpent's head. Likewise He dealt with Abraham, commanding him to depart out of his native country, and promising him He would make of him a great nation, and would bless him; moreover, that through His Seed (Christ) all people on earth should be blessed. And so He called Moses, and David, and Mary, the mother of Christ, who received His Word with faith, and said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy Word." Thus God begins: the Word of promise and of grace goes before. And although there be still in us an overplus of sin, yet, notwithstanding, God will not impute these sins unto us for the sake of Jesus Christ. Ah! to know Christ is the highest treasure, of whom the wicked world know nothing; yea, they contemn Him. It goes with them as St. John writes in his first chapter: "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."

Thou art the Way: to Thee alone
From sin and death we flee,
And he who would the Father seek,
Must seek Him, Lord, by Thee.

January 7

Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me. *Ps. l. 15.*

* * *

The Scriptures show two manner of sacrifices that are acceptable and pleasing to God. The first is called a sacrifice of thanks or praise: when we teach and preach God's Word purely; when we hear and receive it with faith; when we acknowledge the same, and do everything that tends to the spreading of it abroad, and thank God from our hearts for the unspeakable benefits which through the same are bestowed upon us in Christ; when we praise and glorify Him. In the Psalms we find many such expressions of thanks or praise. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good; because His mercy endureth forever." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." "Offer unto God thanksgiving." Secondly, when a sorrowful and troubled heart in all manner of temptations has his refuge in God, calls upon Him in true and upright faith, seeks help from Him, and waits patiently upon Him. The Psalms offer many examples of such sacrifices also. "I called upon the Lord in distress; the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

To God, the Father of all love,
The God of earth and heaven,
The mighty God who reigns above,
Be praise and glory given!
With healing balm my soul He fills,
And every pain and sorrow stills:
To God all praise and glory.

January 8

I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Let, I pray Thee, Thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Thy Word unto Thy servant. *Ps. cxix. 75, 76.*

* * *

God the Lord is not angry, for if God should be earnestly angry, then were we all utterly lost and gone. God does not willingly strike mankind, but as a just God He is constrained to punish. When we are unthankful and disobedient to His Word and Commandments, then He suffers us, through the devil, soundly to be lashed with pestilence, with famine, and with suchlike whips, and He does so, not because He is our enemy, and takes pleasure in our suffering, but that through such scourging He may call us to repentance and amendment. Thereby He entices us that we may seek Him, run to Him, and cry to Him for help. Of this we have a fine example in the book of Judges, where the Angel, in God's person, speaks thus: "I have stricken you so often and ye are nothing the better for it"; and the people of Israel said: "Save Thou us but now, we have sinned and done amiss: punish Thou us, O Lord, and do with us what Thou wilt, only save us now." When we give and yield ourselves to our Savior, Jesus Christ, and desire that He would help us, then most certainly He helps us as true God, but the trouble is, we lack in this, that we cannot yield. Notice that the Word says: "Do to us what Thou wilt, only deliver and help us." Therefore he that can humble himself earnestly before God in Christ, the same has already won.

O God, Thou righteous, faithful Lord,
I have not kept Thy holy Word,
But sinned and oft offended Thee;
Now I repent, it grieveth me.

January 9

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength, because of Thine enemies; that Thou mightest still the enemy and he avenger. *Ps. viii. 1, 2.*

* * *

When God intends or has in mind some great work, then he begins the same by and through a poor human creature and afterwards gives such assistance that the enemies who seek to hinder them are overcome. We know how He delivered the children of Israel from their long, wearisome, and heavy captivity in Egypt: He first called Moses, and afterwards He gave unto him his brother Aaron as an assistant; they went to Pharaoh, spoke unto him by the commandment of the Lord, "the God of the Hebrews," that he should let Israel go. Although Pharaoh at first set himself against them, and plagued the people worse than before, nevertheless he was forced in the end, through the plagues sent by God, to let Israel go. And later when Pharaoh repented and wished to bring the children of Israel back, in attempting to follow them across the Red Sea, he and all his people were drowned, according to the will of God. In the time of Eli the priest, when Israel was in sore straits, the Philistines pressing hard upon them, and taking away the ark of the covenant, God raised up Samuel, and through him helped Israel up again. Then again we remember how God raised up to rule His people, David, through whom God not only saved Israel out of the enemies' hands, but brought to obedience all kings and people that set themselves against him.

Give to our God immortal praise!
Mercy and truth are all His ways,
Wonders of grace to God belong:
Repeat His mercies in your song.

January 10

> These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. *Ps. l. 21, 22.*

* * *

God shows no greater anger than when He is silent and does not talk with us, but suffers us to go on in our sinful works, and do all things according to our own lusts and pleasures. Thus God dealt with the Jews, as we read in the 81st Psalm: "Hear, My people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if Thou wilt hearken unto Me; there shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. But my people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels" (*Ps. lxxxi. 8-12*). They cried sore and prayed vehemently, with great and earnest zeal, as their books of prayers show. I wonder that God did not hear them: certainly His anger was very great. Now, when they cry, God answers them in this manner: As I preached and cried to you, and there was none that would hear, therefore will I not hear; My threatening sermons you have despised, therefore I will not hear you. No man was ever able to describe or express the fierceness of God's anger when it is kindled.

Out of the depths I cry to Thee,
Lord, hear my lamentation;
Bend down Thy gracious ear to me,
And grant my supplication;
For if Thou fix Thy searching eye
On all sins and iniquity,
Who, Lord, can stand before Thee?

January 11

> Let my heart be sound in Thy statutes, that I be not ashamed. . . . They had almost consumed me upon earth: but I forsook not Thy precepts. *Ps. cxix. 80, 87.*

* * *

In matters of religion and what concerns God's Word, we must be sure and certain without wavering. Above all things, let us be sure that the doctrine which we teach is God's Word, for when we are sure of that, then we may build thereupon and be sure that this cause shall remain; the devil shall not be able to overthrow it, much less the world be able to root it out, rage as they will. I, God be praised, do surely know that the doctrine which I teach is God's Word, and have now hunted from my heart all other doctrines and faiths which I see do not concur with God's Word, have overcome those temptations, the doubtful thoughts which sometimes tormented me, such as: Are you the only man who has God's Word pure and clear, and all others fail therein? That doctrine which the Christian Church so many years has held and established for right, will you presume to reject and overthrow with your new doctrine, as if it were false and erroneous, and thereby produce trouble, alteration, and confusion both in spiritual and temporal government? This argument of the devil I find in all the prophets, where the chief heads and members both in church and commonwealth always have upbraided them, saying: We are God's people, we are placed and by God ordained in an established government: what we conclude and acknowledge for right, the same must and shall be observed and kept. Truly, in this case we must not only be well armed with God's Word and established therein, but we must also have the certainty of conviction that we have the true doctrine, otherwise we shall not be able to subsist in the combat.

> And since the cause and glory, Lord,
> Are Thine, not ours, do Thou afford
> Us help and strength and constancy;
> With all our heart we trust in Thee.

January 12

> Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts. *Ps. cxlv. 3, 4.*

* * *

All the works of God are unsearchable and unspeakable: no human sense can find them out; only faith takes hold thereof without human power and wisdom. No human creature can take hold or know God in His majesty, and therefore He has set Himself down in the simplest manner, and was made man, yea, was made sin, death, and weakness. But who can believe it? No man is able to imagine, much less to understand, what God has done and still does without ceasing. All that He has done, all those things which He daily creates, the ungodly, blind world does not see, nor acknowledge for God's wonders; they think all is done by chance and haphazard. On the contrary, the good and godly, wheresoever they cast their eyes, see and acknowledge all as God's wonders, at which they are astonished; they see in them their delight and joy, they laud and praise the Creator, and know also that God is well pleased with their praise. The children of the world, which are in darkness, see nothing of these things, but still less do they know of the causes of faith. That three persons are only one God; that the true Son of God was made man; that in Christ are two natures, divine and human, all this offends them; they consider these things myths and fables. Truly, it is a very high and hard article, that God was made man!

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the
King of creation.
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy
Health and Salvation!
Join the full throng;
Wake, harp and psalter and song;
Sound forth in glad adoration.

January 13

Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart standeth in awe of Thy Word. . . . Great peace have they which love Thy Law: and nothing shall offend them. *Ps. cxix. 161, 165.*

* * *

When God preaches His Word, presently there follows in the life of the good and godly Christian the cross, as St. Paul witnesses: "All that will live a godly life in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution." And our Savior says: "The disciple is not greater than his Master: have they persecuted Me? they will persecute you also." Therefore it is most certain that the cross follows, and under the cross God's Word is rightly understood. The work, which follows the Word, rightly expounds and declares the Word as the prophet Isaiah says: grief and sorrow teaches how to mark the Word. What does he know about the Word who is without tribulation and temptation? No man understands the Scripture except he be acquainted with the cross. When God bestows benefits and gifts upon the people in the world, they take away from God the honor due Him for the same. God will bear with us when we boast of our power, of our riches, wisdom, and arts; these things God suffers and is content to let them pass; but His Word and true religion, of that He will have and keep the honor to Himself. Therefore God hangs the cross about our necks, as scorn, persecution, the world, and the devil, thereby to keep us in humility (lest we be pricked with pride), that God Himself may have the honor.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
By the cross are sanctified;
Peace is there that knows no measure,
Joys that through all time abide.

January 14

> Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts: so shall I talk of Thy wondrous works. . . . . Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them. *Ps. cxix. 27, 129.*

* * *

Christ says: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God." Here one might ask, What mystery is that? The mysteries of the kingdom of God are such things which lie hid in the kingdom of God; as Christ with all His graces, whom He has shown to us. He who knows Christ aright, knows what God's kingdom is, and what may be found there. It is called a mystery, because it is secret and hid from human sense and reason where the Holy Ghost does not reveal it; for although many do hear and discern the same, yet, notwithstanding, they never conceive nor understand it. They hear of Christ and speak of Christ, that He has given Himself to death for our sins, but the same is only upon their tongues and in their ears, but not in their hearts, for they neither believe it nor are sensible of it, as St. Paul says: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." Therefore Christ says: "To you it is given to know," that is, the Spirit of God gives it to you, so that you not only hear and see it, but you receive it within your hearts and believe it, therefore it is no mystery or secret to you. But to those who have not faith in their heart, though they hear it, to them it remains a mystery.

Father, in us Thy Son reveal;
Teach us to know and do Thy will;
Thy saving power and love display,
And guide us to the realms of day.

January 15

> Stablish Thy Word unto Thy servant, who is devoted to Thy fear. . . . Thy Word is true from the beginning: and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth forever. *Ps. cxix. 38, 160.*

* * *

Is it true that God Himself speaks with us in the Holy Scriptures? One who doubts this must think in his heart that God is a liar: one who says a thing and does not perform it. But such a person ought to know that when God opens His mouth it is as much as three worlds. God with one word made the world (*Gen. i*). The Psalmist says: "When He speaketh, it is done; when He commandeth it standeth fast." We must make a great difference between God's Word and the word of man. A man's word is but a little sound, which flies into the air and soon vanishes; but the Word of God is greater than heaven and earth, yea, it is greater than death and hell, for it is the power of God, and remains everlastingly; therefore we ought diligently to learn God's Word, and we must certainly know and believe that God Himself speaks with us. David knew this, and believed, for he said: "God hath spoken in His holiness, I will rejoice." We should also be glad thereof, but such joy and gladness many times is in the season of affliction. This David experienced when he endured manifold temptations and trials, which made him say: "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." We should always rejoice in the Lord, yet with fear and reverence toward Him.

Father of mercies, in Thy Word
What endless glory shines!
Forever be Thy name adored
For these celestial lines.

January 16

Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law. I am a stranger in the earth; hide not Thy commandments from me. *Ps. cxix. 18, 19.*

* * *

If you wish to be sure and certain of your conscience and salvation, then abstain from speculating and searching to know God, His essence, and His will, according to your own carnal mind, sense, and reason. Without the Word and His Son, Jesus Christ, God will not be found. You must learn to take hold of God by the means which He has given us; namely, the Word concerning Jesus Christ. St. Paul says: "For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" *(1 Cor. i. 21-24)*. Therefore begin to seek God there where Christ Himself began; where He was conceived in the womb of His mother, the Virgin Mary, and where He lay in the manger at Bethlehem. For He came down from heaven, was born a natural human creature, walked with us on earth, preached, wrought miracles, suffered, was crucified and died, and arose again from the dead, that He might place Himself in such a manner before our corporeal eyes, thereby to draw the eyes of our hearts to Him. In His Word he causes to be offered to us such things as are necessary for our knowledge to salvation.

The Gospel shows the Father's grace,
Who sent His Son to save our race;
Proclaims how Jesus lived and died
That man might thus be justified.

January 17

> Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways. *Ps. cxix. 1, 2, 3.*

* * *

I esteem those to be the best preachers, which teach the common people and youth most plainly and simply, without subtilty or enlargements. Christ taught the people by plain and simple parables. And those are the best hearers, who willingly hear and believe God's Word simply and plainly, and although they be weak in faith, yet so long as they do not doubt the doctrine, they may be helped, for God can and will bear weakness, if we but acknowledge it and if we pray to God for grace, and repent. We ought diligently to regard the strength of the Word of God, and not contemn it, for God wishes to deal with us by this means, and will also work in us through this means. The ancient fathers say well that we ought not to look to the person baptizing or ministering the Sacrament, but we must look to God's Word. Our God elects Him hearts to whom He reveals His Word, and He also gives them mouths to speak it; preserves and maintains it, not by sword, but through His divine power. A fiery shield is God's Word. It is of more substance and purer than gold tried in the fire; and as gold loses none of its substance in the fire, but resists and overcomes all the fury of the fiery heat and flame, so he that believes God's Word overcomes all, and remains sure everlastingly against all misfortunes.

A trusty weapon is Thy Word,
Thy Church's buckler, shield, and sword;
Lord, let us in this Word abide,
That we may seek no other guide.

January 18

Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. *Ps. cxxvii. 1.*

* * *

In this little verse Solomon would briefly teach all kings, princes, magistrates, and all who must reign, how they should rule peaceably and well, and conduct all things that they may be well. For, first, they should watch and labor as their office demands. For he does not say that they should not watch or labor. So also St. Paul says *(Rom. xii. 8)* that those that rule should do this with diligence. Yet he desires that their watching should not be in vain and lost, but useful and profitable. Therefore, they should commit such watching to God in true faith, and let Him care how He would provide for protection. They should not presumptuously think that their watching and labor are protecting the city, but cast their care upon God and believe that He would protect the city, and guard the country and its people. Let them, therefore, watch without presumption and care, in true faith. For although God will keep nothing, unless we are diligent and watch, yet He does not want us to think that our watching and labor are doing that, which alone His goodness and grace can do. If we watch, trusting in ourselves, either of the two will follow—presumption or care. If all is well and secure we boast of our watching; if things go wrong, we worry, tremble, and despair. Now God desires neither presumption nor care; we should not worry if we do not feel safe; neither should we boast, if we feel safe; but we should watch with right, true faith and do what is our duty.

Beneath His watchful eye
His saints securely dwell;
That hand which bears creation up
Shall guard His children well.

January 19

He will not always chide; neither will He keep His anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. *Ps. ciii. 9, 10.*

* * *

God is upright, faithful, and true, as He has shown; not only that He has given us His promises in Christ, through whom we have forgiveness of sins and deliverance from everlasting death, but also in that He has laid before us in the Scriptures many gracious and comfortable examples of great and holy saints, which of God were highly enlightened and favored, and yet, notwithstanding, fell into great and heavy sins. Adam, by his fall and disobedience, hereditarily conveyed sin and death upon all his posterity. Aaron brought a great sin upon Israel, insomuch that God for the same would have destroyed them. David also fell very heavily, Peter denied, Paul persecuted Christ. These and innumerable other examples the Scriptures relate unto us, not that we should live securely and should sin because of the mercies of God, but that when we feel God's anger (which will surely follow upon sin), then we should not despair, but should well remember such comfortable examples, and thereby certainly conclude that as God was merciful unto them, so likewise He will be gracious unto us, out of His mere goodness and mercy shown in Christ, and will not impute our sins to us.

When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise.

January 20

Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead. *Gal. i. 1.*

* * *

Paul had planted among the Galatians the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and the righteousness of faith; but by and by, after his departure, there crept in certain false teachers, which overthrew all that he had planted and truly taught among them. Here in the very beginning of his Epistle Paul touches those false teachers which boasted themselves to be the disciples of the Apostles, and to be sent of them, but despised Paul, as one that was neither the Apostles' scholar, nor sent of any to preach the Gospel, but came in some other way, and of his own hand thrust himself into that office. Against these Paul defends his calling, and says: My calling seems base to your preachers; but whoever they may be, they are sent either of men or by man; that is to say, they have entered either of themselves, being not called, or else called by others. But my calling is not of men, nor by men, but it is above all manner of calling that can be made by the Apostles, for it is "by Jesus Christ." God calls men to the ministry of the Word at this day, not immediately by Himself but by man. But the Apostles were called immediately of Christ Himself as the prophets in old time were called by God Himself. And Paul says, As for me, I am called and sent neither of men, nor by man, but without means, that is, by Jesus Christ Himself. And he adds, by "God the Father, who raised Him from the dead." Out of the abundance of his heart he wishes to set forth the unsearchable riches of Christ, who rose from the dead, and in so doing has gained the victory over the law, sin, death, hell, and all evils. And this victory he has given unto us.

Come as a teacher, sent from God,
Charged His whole counsel to declare;
Lift o'er our ranks the prophet's rod,
While we uphold thy hands with prayer.

January 21

And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia. *Gal. i. 2.*

* * *

These words are to stop the mouths of those false apostles; for all Paul's arguments tend to the advancing and magnifying of his ministry, and, contrariwise, to the discrediting of theirs. It is as if he would say: "Although it is enough that I, through a divine calling, am sent as an Apostle by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, which raised Him up from the dead; yet, lest I should be alone, I add besides, that all the brethren, which are not Apostles, but fellow-soldiers, write this Epistle as well as I, and bear witness with me that my doctrine is true and godly. Wherefore we are sure that Christ is present with us and that He teaches and speaks in the midst of us and in our church. As for the false apostles, if they are anything, they are sent either of men, or by men; but I am sent of God the Father, and of Jesus Chrsit, who is our Life and Resurrection. My other brethren are sent from God; although, it is true, by man, that is, by me. Therefore, lest they might say that I only set myself proudly against them, I have my brethren with me, all of one mind, as faithful witnesses, which think, write, and teach the selfsame thing that I do." *Unto the churches of Galatia.* In these words Paul wishes to show that the false apostles would not endanger themselves to go to Jerusalem, to Caiaphas, or to Rome, to the Emperor, or to other places where no man had preached before, as Paul and the other Apostles did; but they went into Galatia, which was won unto Christ already by the labor and travail of Paul, and into Asia, Corinth, and such other places, where good men were, who professed the name of Christ, and where they, the enemies of Christ's cross, might live in great security, and without any persecution.

Send men whose eyes have seen the King
Men in whose ears His sweet words ring;
Send such Thy lost ones home to bring;
Send them where Thou wilt come.

January 22

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ. *Gal. i. 3.*

* * *

This greeting of the Apostle is strange to the world and was never heard of before the preaching of the Gospel. These two words, grace and peace, comprehend in them whatever belongs to Christianity. Grace releases sin, and peace makes the conscience quiet. But Christ has vanquished these two monsters, sin and conscience. This the world does not know, and therefore it can teach no certainty of the overcoming of sin, conscience, and death. Only Christians have this kind of doctrine, and are exercised and armed with it to overcome sin, despair, and everlasting death. Peace of conscience, however, can never be had unless sin be first forgiven. And sin is not forgiven by the fulfilling of the Law; for no man is able to satisfy the Law. Much less is sin taken away by the works and inventions of men; there is no work that can take away sin. There is no means to take away sin, but grace alone. *By grace alone* we have remission of sins and peace with God. And the Apostle fitly distinguishes this grace and peace from all other kinds of grace and peace. He wishes to the Galatians grace and peace, not from the emperor, or kings and princes, not from the world, but from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, which is as much as to say, he wishes them a heavenly peace. In affliction and in the hour of death, the grace and favor of the world cannot help us. But when the grace and peace of God are in the heart, then is man strong, so that he can neither be cast down with adversity, nor puffed up with prosperity, but walks on bravely and keeps the highway. This peace of God Paul wishes the Galatians.

And thus I live in God at peace,
And die without a thought of fear,
Content to take what God decrees,
For through His Son my faith is clear,
His grace shall be in death my stay,
And peace shall bless my dying day.

January 23

Who gave Himself for our sins. *Gal. i. 4a.*

* * *

Paul speaks of nothing but Christ, and therefore in every word there is a fervency of spirit and life. And mark how well and to the purpose he speaks. He does not say: Which have received our works at our hands, nor, Which have received the sacrifices of Moses' law, worshipings, etc.; but, hath given—what? Not gold, nor silver, nor beasts, nor paschal lambs, nor an angel, but Himself! For what? Not for a crown, not for a kingdom, not for our holiness and righteousness, but "for our *sins.*" These words are very thunderclaps from heaven against all kinds of righteousness. Again, by this sentence it is declared that our sins are so great, so infinite and invincible, that it is impossible for the whole world to atone for one of them. Here is to be marked the infinite greatness of the price bestowed for our sin, and then it will be evident that the power of it is so great, that by no means could it be put away except the Son of man be given for it. Furthermore, this sentence sets out to the conscience of all men who are terrified with the greatness of their sins, a singular comfort. For, although sin be never so invincible a tyrant, yet notwithstanding, forasmuch as Christ has overcome it through His death, it cannot hurt them that believe in Him. Especially mark well the pronoun *our.* You who judge yourself unworthy of this grace, should from your heart say and believe that Christ was given for your sins also. The chief knowledge and true wisdom of Christians is to count these words of Paul true and of great importance, that Christ was delivered for our sins.

He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood avails for me.

January 24

That He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father, To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. *Gal. i. 4b, 5.*

* * *

In these words Paul calls this whole world, which has been, is, and shall be, the present world, to put a difference between this and the everlasting world to come. Moreover, he calls it evil, because that whatsoever is in this world, is subject to the malice of the devil reigning over the whole world. For there is in it nothing but ignorance, contempt, blasphemy, hatred of God, and disobedience against all the words and works of God. In and under this kingdom of the world are we. By these words then, "that He might deliver us," Paul shows that we have need of grace and of Christ, and that no other creature, neither man nor angel, can deliver man out of this present evil world. For these works are only belonging to the Divine Majesty, and are not in the power of any, either man or angel. Christ has put away our sin and has delivered us from this wicked world, which is an obedient servant and willing follower of the devil. *According to the will of God and our Father.* We are not delivered by our own will, or cunning, nor by our own wisdom or policy, but God has had mercy upon us, and has loved us. Paul makes mention of the Father's will, that in Jesus' words and works we should not so much look upon Jesus as upon the Father. For Christ came into this world, and took man's nature upon Him, that He might be made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and so reconcile us to the Father; this was done through the good pleasure of the Father, that we, by fastening our eyes upon Christ, might be drawn and carried straight unto the Father. *To whom be glory for ever and ever.* Here are intermingled praise and thanksgiving. This is the right kind of worship and service to God.

The Gospel shows the Father's grace,
Who sent His Son to save our race;
Proclaims how Jesus lived and died
That man might thus be justified.

January 25

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel. *Gal. i. 6.*

* * *

You see how Paul handles his Galatians, which were fallen away and seduced by the false apostles. He does not at the first set upon them with vehement and rigorous words, but after a very fatherly sort, speaks tenderly to them, and yet, in such a way that he reproves them notwithstanding. Forasmuch as his purpose was to raise up them that were fallen, and with a fatherly care to call them back again from their error to the purity of the Gospel, he most gently and mildly speaks to them. He complains that to fall from faith is an easy matter. Paul, with singular study and diligence, had planted churches in Galatia, and yet he had scarcely set his foot out of the door, as it were, but by and by the false apostles overthrew some. To the intent that he might call back again those backsliders, he tells them that he knows they have been deceived, not by their own default, but by the default of the false apostles, yet notwithstanding, he would have wished that they had grown up a little more in the strength of sound doctrine. You are removed, he says, "from Him that called you into the grace of Christ," as though he would say: My preaching was not of the hard Law of Moses, neither taught I that you should be bond-slaves under the yoke; but I preached the only doctrine of grace and freedom from the Law, sin, wrath, and damnation, that you should be freemen under Christ. And will you suffer yourselves to be carried away, yea, and that so soon, from such a living Fountain, full of grace and life, unto another Gospel? He calls the teaching of the false apostles "another Gospel," but he says this in derision.

My soul be on thy guard;
Ten thousand foes arise,
And hosts of sin are pressing hard
To draw thee from the skies.

January 26

> Which is not another: but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ. *Gal. i. 7.*

* * *

That which the false apostles taught was not another Gospel, as Paul here points out. The false prophets taught that, besides faith in Christ, the works of the Law of God were also necessary to salvation. Most earnestly and obstinately they contended that the law ought to be observed, unto whom the stiff-necked Jews forthwith joined themselves, and afterwards easily persuaded such as were not established in the faith that Paul was not a sincere teacher, because he regarded not the Law. To the end that they might set them the more sharply against him, they said that he preached unto the Gentiles freedom from the Law to bring into contempt, yea, utterly to abolish the Law of God and the kingdom of the Jews, saying, that they themselves ought rather to be heard, who, besides that they preached the Gospel rightly, were also the very disciples of the Apostles, with whom Paul was never conversant. By this policy they defamed Paul among the Galatians, so that by very necessity, Paul was compelled with all his might to set himself against these false apostles, whom he boldly reproved and condemned, saying that they were the troublers of the churches, and overthrowers of Christ's Gospel. He says, Because they mingle the Law and the Gospel, they must needs be perverters of the Gospel. For either Christ must remain, and the Law perish, or the Law must remain and Christ perish. Where the righteousness of the Law rules, there the righteousness of grace cannot rule. And if you cannot believe that God forgives our sins for Christ's sake, whom God sent into the world to be our Highpriest, how then will you believe that He will forgive the same for the works of the Law, which you could never perform?

'Tis not by works of righteousness
Which our own hands have done,
But we are saved by sovereign grace
Abounding through His Son.

January 27

> But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. *Gal. i. 8.*

* * *

Because the false apostles were exceedingly bold and shameless, and with all their might set themselves against Paul, he, in turn, using his spirit of zeal and fervency, and being fully persuaded of the certainty of his calling, sets himself strongly against them, and wonderfully magnifies his ministry in the above words. Although, he says, we ourselves, I and my brethren. Timothy and Titus and as many as teach Christ purely with me (I am not now speaking of those seducers of consciences), yea, if an angel from heaven preach unto you, I would rather that I myself, my brethren, yea and the very angels from heaven should be held accursed, than that my Gospel should be overthrown. This is indeed a vehement zeal, that he dare so boldly curse, not only himself, and his brethren, but also even an angel from heaven. But this is the mind of Paul: I had rather that myself, and my other brethren, yea, and an angel from heaven, should be accursed, than that we or others should preach any other Gospel than that we have preached already. Paul therefore concludes that there is no other Gospel besides that which he himself had preached. But he preached not a Gospel which he had himself devised, but the same which God promised before by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures *(Rom. i.)*; therefore he pronounces himself and others to be undoubtedly accursed if they teach anything contrary to the former Gospel; for the voice of the Gospel, once sent forth, shall not be called back again till the day of judgment.

> Thy Gospel-heralds dare not rest,
> Till through the world Thy truth has run;
> Till Christ has all the nations blest
> That see the light, or feel the sun.

January 28

As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. *Gal. i. 9.*

* * *

In this verse Paul repeats the selfsame thing, only changing the persons. Before he cursed himself, his brethren, and an angel from heaven; here he says, If there be any besides us which preach unto you any other Gospel than that which you have received of us, let them also be accursed. This shows exceeding great fervency of spirit in the Apostle, that he dare curse all teachers throughout the whole world and in heaven which pervert his Gospel and teach any other; all men must either believe that Gospel that Paul preached, or else they must be accursed and condemned. The changing of persons is here to be marked. Paul speaks otherwise in the first cursing than he does in the second. In the first he says, "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you any other Gospel than that we have preached unto you"; in the second, "Than that ye have received." And this he does, lest the Galatians should say, We do not pervert the Gospel that you preached unto us; we did not understand you rightly, but the teachers that came after you have declared unto us the true meaning. This, Paul says, I will in no case admit. They ought to add nothing to it, nor correct it, for that which you heard of me is the sincere Word of God; this only must remain. Neither do I desire myself to be another manner of teacher than I was, nor you other disciples. Wherefore, if you hear any man bringing any other Gospel than that you have heard of me, or bragging that he will deliver better things than you have received of me, let him and his disciples be both accursed. Paul here subjects himself and an angel from heaven, all doctors upon earth, and all other teachers and masters whatsoever, under the authority of the Scripture. No doctrine ought to be taught or heard in the Church than the pure Word of God.

Within Thy temple when they stand,
To teach the truth as taught by Thee,
Savior, like stars in Thy right hand,
Let all Thy Church's pastors be.

January 29

> For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. *Gal. i. 10.*

* * *

Paul would here say: Does it not appear sufficiently unto you by my preaching, and by so many and so great afflictions which I have suffered, whether I serve men or God? Do I not show plainly enough by my preaching that I seek not the favor or praise of men, but to set forth the benefit and glory of God? Neither do we seek the favor of men by our doctrine; for we teach that all men are wicked by nature and the children of wrath. We condemn man's free-will, his strength, wisdom, and righteousness; but we preach that we obtain God's grace by the free mercy of God only, for Christ's sake. This is not to preach for the favor of men and the world. If I sought the favor of men I would not condemn their works. But I show God's judgment out of His Word against all men, how that they are sinners, and that they are not made righteous by works or by circumcision, but by grace only and faith in Christ. The false apostles must needs seek to please and to flatter men, to the end that they may live in peace and security of the flesh. They teach the things which are of men, that is to say, wicked things, or else they allow the blasphemies and wicked judgments of the adversaries, contrary to the Word of God, against their own conscience, in order that they may still keep the favor of princes and bishops, and enjoy their goods. But I desire only that my doctrine may please God, and by this means I make men my mortal enemies.

> Sure I must fight, if I would reign!
> Increase my courage, Lord;
> I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
> Supported by Thy Word.

January 30

> But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man: for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. *Gal. i. 11, 12.*

* * *

When Paul says here that his Gospel is not after man, he means not that his Gospel is not earthly, for that is manifest of itself—the false apostles bragged also that their doctrine was not earthly but heavenly—but he means that he learned not his Gospel by the ministry of men, or received it by any earthly means, as we all learn it, either by the ministry of men, or by some earthly means, some by hearing, some by reading, and some by writing. But he received the same only by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul received his Gospel in the way as he was going to Damascus, where Christ appeared unto him, and talked with him. Being called, enlightened, and taught of Christ in the way, he was sent to Ananias, that he might also have the testimony of men that he was called of God to preach the Gospel of Christ. This Paul was constrained to recite to put away the slander of the false apostles, who labored to bring him into hatred with the Galatians, saying that Paul was inferior to the rest of the Apostles' scholars, who had received of the Apostles that which they taught and kept, and that Paul himself had also received the same things of them, though he now denied it. So they easily deceived the Galatians, who were not fully established and grounded, but as yet weak in the faith. Let every careful Christian labor and strive diligently to learn and to keep this doctrine which Paul taught, and let him use humble and hearty prayer, with continued study and meditation of the Word, that he may remain faithful.

A trusty weapon is Thy Word,
The Church's buckler, shield, and sword;
Lord, let us in this Word abide,
That we may seek no other guide.

January 31

> For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. *Gal. i. 13, 14.*

* * *

Paul quotes here his own example, saying, I have in the past defended the traditions of the Pharisees, and the Jewish religion, more constantly than you and all your false teachers. Now, if the righteousness of the law had been worth anything, I would not have turned back from it; although in the keeping of it, before I knew Christ, I so exercised myself, and so profited therein, that I excelled many of my companions of mine own nation. *Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.* In this place Paul treats not of the pharisaical traditions, but of a far higher matter: the law of Moses, which he calls the fathers' traditions; that is to say, received and left as an inheritance from the fathers. For these, said he, when I was in the Jewish religion, I was very zealous. To the Philippians he writes: "As concerning the law, I was a Pharisee; concerning zeal, I persecuted the Church; and as concerning the righteousness of the law, I was unrebukable." As though he would say: Here I may glory and compare with the whole nation of the Jews, yea, even with the best and holiest of all those which are of the circumcision. Let them show me, if they can, a more zealous and earnest defender of Moses' law than I have been. This ought to have persuaded you not to believe these deceivers, which magnify the righteousness of the law as a matter of great importance; whereas if there were any cause to glory in the righteousness of the law, I have more cause to glory than any.

> The darkness of my former state,
> The bondage, all was mine;
> The light of life in which I walk,
> The liberty is Thine.

February 1

> But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace. *Gal. i. 15.*

* * *

But when it pleased God. He would say: It is God's pure, unsearchable grace, that He not only spared me, a most reprobate man, a blasphemer, persecutor, and sacriligious person, but even granted me the knowledge of salvation, the Holy Spirit, Christ, His Son, the apostleship, and eternal life. Likewise God mercifully regarded us, who were loaded down with the same sins, and has not only forgiven us, out of pure compassion and for Christ's sake, our wickedness and blasphemies, but has in addition enriched us with the greatest gifts and spiritual blessings. But many of us are ungrateful against God for this unspeakable grace and forget, as we read in II Pet. i. 9, the purging from our old sins and the grace given to us; in addition we open the door to the devil and begin to be weary of the Word, and very many pervert it and start new heresies. *Who separated me from my mother's womb.* This is a Hebrew phrase and means: He has sanctified me, ordained me, and prepared me; that is, when I was still in my mother's womb, God foresaw that it would come thus, that I would rage with great fury against His Church and that He afterwards, out of pure grace, would bring me out of the course of my cruelty and blasphemy, according to His mercy, upon the way of truth and salvation. In this way Paul cuts off all merit from himself and ascribes all glory alone to God, while he charges himself only with shame, as if he would say: Therefore I receive this gift alone through God's grace.

Grace! 'tis a charming sound,
Harmonious to the ear;
Heav'n with the echo shall resound,
And all the earth shall hear.

February 2

To reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen. *Gal. i. 16a.*

* * *

Here Paul shows what manner of doctrine is given and committed to him; namely, the doctrine of the Gospel, which is the revelation of the Son of God. This is a doctrine quite contrary to the Law. The Law shows forth sin, terrifies the conscience, reveals death, the wrath and judgment of God, and hell, but does not reveal the Son of God. The Gospel is such a doctrine as admits no Law; it must be separate as far from the Law as there is distance between heaven and earth. This difference in itself is easy and plain, but in the agony and conflict of conscience, to hold this fast and to practice it in deed, is a hard matter. The Gospel teaches that Christ came that He might be made an oblation for the sins of the whole world, and that our sins might be forgiven, and everlasting life given us for His sake, and not for the works of the Law or for our own righteousness. But this kind of doctrine is not learned or gotten by any study, diligence, or wisdom of men, nor yet by the Law of God, but is revealed by God Himself, first by the external Word, then by the working of God's Spirit inwardly. *That I might preach Him among the heathen.* For what purpose was Christ revealed in him? Not only that Paul himself should believe in the Son of God, but also that he should preach Him among the Gentiles. Paul comprehends here in a few words his whole office and ministry, which is to bring this Gospel to the Gentiles, and to show unto them the same revelation which he himself had received. Therefore he says to the Galatians, You ought to hear no teacher that teaches the Law and not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Father, in us Thy Son reveal,
Teach us to know and do Thy will;
Thy saving power and love display,
And guide us to the realms of day.

February 3

> Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. *Gal. i. 16b, 17.*

* * *

Paul here means to say that after he had once received the revelation of the Gospel from Christ, he consulted not with any man, much less did he desire any man to teach him the Gospel. He did not go to Jerusalem, to Peter and the other Apostles, to learn the Gospel of them, but forthwith he preached Jesus Christ in Damascus, where he received baptism of Ananias and imposition of hands; for it was necessary for him to have the outward sign and testimony of his calling. I went into Arabia, he says, before I saw the Apostles, or consulted with them, and forthwith I took upon me the office of preaching among the Gentiles; for thereunto I was called, and had also received a revelation from God. He did not, then, receive his Gospel of any man, or of the Apostles themselves, but was content with his heavenly calling, and with the revelation of Jesus Christ alone. Wherefore this whole place is a confutation of the false apostles' argument that Paul was but a scholar and a hearer of the Apostles, who lived after the Law; and, moreover, that Paul himself also had lived according to the Law, and therefore it was necessary that the Gentiles themselves should keep the Law, and be circumcised. In order that he might stop the mouths of these cavillers, he rehearses his history. Before my conversion, he says, I did not learn my Gospel of the Apostles, nor of any other of the brethren that believed; neither after my conversion, for forthwith I preached at Damascus, not Moses with his Law, but Jesus Christ, consulting with no man, not having seen as yet, any of the Apostles.

> Give tongues of fire and hearts of love,
> To preach the reconciling Word;
> Give power and unction from above,
> Where'er the joyful sound is heard.

February 4

> Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the Apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. *Gal. i. 18, 19.*

* * *

Paul grants that he was with the Apostles, but not with all the Apostles However, he declares that he went to Jerusalem to them of his own accord, not by command; not to learn anything of them, but to see Peter. All his words are so framed that they prove his Gospel not to be of man. Indeed, he admits that he had seen Peter, and James the brother of our Lord, but none of the other Apostles besides these two, and that he learned nothing of them. The whole effect then of this matter lies in the words "to see." I went, he says, to see Peter and not to learn of him. Therefore neither is Peter my master, nor yet James. But why does Paul repeat this so often, that he learned not his Gospel of men, nor of the Apostles themselves? His purpose is this, to persuade the churches of Galatia, which were now led away by the false apostles, and to put them out of all doubt that his Gospel was the true Word of God. For his ministry was here in great danger, and all the churches likewise, which had used him as their chief pastor and teacher. Here Paul had a weighty matter in hand; namely, that all the churches in Galatia might be kept in sound doctrine. For if the pure Word of God is once taken away, there remains no consolation, no life, no salvation. His purpose is therefore to show by this history that he received his Gospel of no man; again, that he had preached for a certain time, both in Damascus and Arabia, by revelation from God, before he had seen any of the Apostles, even the selfsame Gospel that the Apostles had preached.

> Send forth Thy heralds, Lord, to call
> The thoughtless young, the hardened old,
> A scattered, homeless flock, till all
> Be gathered to Thy peaceful fold.

February 5

> Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ: but they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me. *Gal. i. 20-24.*

* * *

Why does Paul add an oath? He is reciting his history and is constrained to swear in order that the churches might believe him. Here you see that Paul, the elect vessel of God, was in so great contempt among his own Galatians, to whom he had preached Christ, that it was necessary for him to swear that he spoke the truth. And he swears in a matter which seems to be of no weight; namely, that he is speaking the truth when he says that he tarried not with Peter to learn of him, but only to see him. However, if you weigh the matter diligently, it is very weighty and of great importance, for it is to give assurance to the Galatians that the doctrine which he preached to them was God's own Word. *Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia,* etc. This he added for the sequel and continuance of the history, that after he had seen Peter, he went into Syria and Cilicia, and there preached, and so preached, that he won the testimony of all the churches in Judea. As though he would say: The churches, not only in Damascus, Arabia, Syria, and Cilicia, but also in Judea, do witness that I have preached the same faith which I once withstood and persecuted. *And they glorified God in me,* not because I taught that circumcision and the Law of Moses ought to be kept, but for the preaching of faith and for the edifying of the churches by my ministry in the Gospel.

> And yet, the Law fulfilled must be
> Or we were lost forever;
> Therefore God sent His Son, that He
> Might us from death deliver.

February 6

Then, fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. *Gal. ii. 1.*

* * *

Having taught abroad among the Gentiles that they were justified by faith only, without the works of the Law, Paul went to Antioch and declared to the disciples what he had done. Then they which had been trained up in the old customs of the Law rose against Paul with great indignation, because he preached to the Gentiles liberty from the bondage of the Law. Whereupon followed great dissensions, which afterwards stirred up new troubles. Paul and Barnabas testified, saying, Wherever we preached this doctrine among the Gentiles, "the Holy Ghost came and fell upon those which heard the Word." Seeing then that by the mere hearing of faith the Holy Ghost came down upon them, it is certain by this sign that the Holy Ghost approves the faith of the Gentiles, for it does not appear that his was ever done before at the preaching of the Law. But the Jews and many of the Pharisees who believed, notwithstanding, having a great zeal for the Law and striving to maintain the glory thereof, set themselves more fiercely against Paul, contending that the Gentiles ought to be circumcised, for otherwise they could not be saved. Paul, seeing that their contentions and clamors increased daily, and being also warned in a revelation from God, after fourteen years went up again to Jerusalem to confer with the other Apostles; yet not for his own cause, but for the people's sake. He then joined unto himself two witnesses, Barnabas and Titus. Barnabus was Paul's companion in preaching, and had seen the Holy Ghost given unto the Gentiles, which were uncircumcised and free from Moses' Law, by the mere preaching of faith in Christ Jesus. Titus was a Gentile who had become a Christian.

His wondrous works and ways
He made by Moses known;
But sent the world His truth and grace
By His beloved Son.

February 7

> And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. *Gal. ii. 2.*

* * *

Because God warned him by a special revelation, and commanded him to go, Paul went up to Jerusalem; and his purpose was to bridle, or at least appease, the Jews that believed and yet obstinately contended about the keeping of the Law, and thus wished to advance and confirm the truth of the Gospel. This he had done after eighteen years of preaching the Gospel among the Gentiles (including the time when he preached in Damascus and Arabia). Among the Jews he suffered the Law and circumcision for a time, as the other Apostles did, yet ever holding the true doctrine of the Gospel. But in order that the weak should not be offended, he no doubt spoke to the Jews in this manner: If that unprofitable service of Moses' Law, which avails nothing toward righteousness, so highly pleases you, you may still keep it, only do not burden the Gentiles and bind them to this Law. Paul confesses that he at this time conferred with the Apostles regarding the Gospel, but, says he, they profited me or taught me nothing; I rather, for the defense of the liberty of the Gospel, in the presence of the Apostles, constantly resisted and overcame those who wished to force the observation of the Law upon the Gentiles. I glory that in going to Jerusalem by the revelation of God, I brought to pass this, that the Apostles approved me and not those which were against me. And I conferred especially with the chiefest among the brethren. We wished that all men should see that this doctrine was in nowise contrary to the doctrine of the other Apostles, and thus stop the mouths of the adversaries.

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

February 8

But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. *Gal. ii. 3.*

* * *

This word (was compelled) sufficiently declares what the consequence and conclusion was; namely, that the Gentiles should not be constrained to be circumcised. Paul did not reject circumcision as a damnable thing, neither did he by word or deed enforce the Jews to forsake it. But he rejected circumcision as a thing not necessary to righteousness, seeing the fathers themselves were not justified by it. The believing Jews who were weak could understand this teaching in no other way than that circumcision was altogether unprofitable and damnable. The false apostles increased this opinion of the weak Jews in order to discredit Paul's doctrine among them. Paul therefore compelled none that would be circumcised to remain uncircumcised, only he would have them understand that circumcision is not necessary to justification. And he suffered the Jews to keep the Law, as long as they did it with a free conscience, and understood that they were justified by faith and not by the Law or circumcision. And Paul might have suffered Titus to be circumcised, being a Gentile, but because he saw that they would compel him thereunto, he would not. For if they had prevailed therein, by and by they would have gathered that it was necessary to justification, and so, through this sufferance, they would have triumphed over Paul. This strong argument Paul could bring against the false apostles, that in this conference it was decided by the consent of all the Apostles, the whole church also approving the same, that Titus should not be circumcised.

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Thy Law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

February 9

> And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you. *Gal. ii. 4, 5.*

* * *

Now, where Paul speaks of the truth of the Gospel, he means that the Gospel is of itself simple, true, and sincere; but by the malice of Satan's ministry, it is corrupted and defaced. The truth of the Gospel is that our righteousness comes by faith alone, without the works of the Law. The corruption or falsehood of the Gospel is that we are justified by faith, but not without the works of the Law. With this condition the false apostles also preached the Gospel. Paul reprehends the false apostles because they had taught a false Gospel, requiring circumcision, and the observation of the Law as necessary to salvation. Moreover, they went about by wonderful craft and subtilty to entrap Paul, for they watched him narrowly to see whether he would circumcise Titus or not, also whether he would withstand them in the presence of the Apostles. They went about, says he, to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage. These false apostles armed themselves on every side, that they might convince and confound Paul before the whole congregation. If they had required this by way of brotherly charity, doubtless he would not have denied it, but seeing they would have it done as a necessary thing, by compulsion, to the overthrowing of the Gospel, and to bring men's conscience into bondage, he set himself mightily against them, and prevailed.

Strong in the Lord of hosts,
And in His mighty power;
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror.

February 10

> But of those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person: for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me. *Gal. ii. 6.*

* * *

This was one of the greatest arguments that the false apostles used against Paul: the Apostles, said they, were familiarly conversant with Christ, they heard and saw all His preachings and miracles while Christ was yet living in the world. To this Paul answers: This argument concludes nothing. Let the Apostles be never so great, yea, let them be angels from heaven, it is no matter to me. The controversy is not here concerning the excellency of the Apostles, but concerning the Word of God and the truth of the Gospel. This ought to be kept pure and uncorrupt; this ought to be preferred above all things. *God accepteth no man's person.* He regards not the office of the apostleship. God would have us fix our eyes upon and rest wholly upon the Word itself. Not that God does not esteem the persons at all, but in the matter of justification he does not regard them, be they never so great and glorious. The truth of the Gospel must continue, so that the Word of God and the righteousness of faith may be kept pure and uncorrupt. Paul says he did not confer with the Apostles that they might teach him anything, for why should they teach him, since Christ, by His revelation, had before sufficiently taught him all things? He declared that he had only told the Apostles what he had taught the Gentiles; namely, faith in Christ alone, without the Law, and that by this preaching of faith the Holy Ghost came down upon the Gentiles, who then immediately spake with divers tongues.

> Thy Word is everlasting truth;
> How pure is every page!
> That holy Book shall guide our youth,
> And well support our age.

February 11

But contrariwise, when they saw that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the Gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter. *Gal. ii. 7.*

* * *

With these words Paul mightily confutes the false apostles, for here he challenges to himself the same authority which the false apostles attributed to the true Apostles, and he returns their argument against themselves. The false apostles, he said, allege against me the authority of the great Apostles to maintain their cause; but I, on the contrary, allege the same against them for my defense, for the Apostles are on my side. The Apostles, when they saw the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to me, and knew of the grace that was given to me, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, approving my ministry, and giving thanks unto God for the gifts which I had received. What does Paul mean when he says that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto him, and of the circumcision unto Peter? The other apostles remained in Jerusalem especially, until God called them unto other places, but Paul, as it is written in the Acts xiii.2, by a singular vocation, was chosen to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, and being sent out of Judea, he traveled through the countries of the Gentiles. He first preached to the Jews, who dwelt here and there among the Gentiles, but when they would not hear his Gospel, he turned to the Gentiles. Paul was sent especially unto the Gentiles, but because he was a debtor unto all, and became all things to all men, therefore, occasion being offered, he went into the synagogues of the Jews, where not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles heard him preaching Christ. He calls the Gentiles uncircumcision, and the Jews circumcision.

The Lord makes bare His arm
Through all the earth abroad:
Let every nation now behold
Their Savior and their God.

February 12

(For He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles.) *Gal. ii. 8.*

* * *

This is a confutation of another argument of the false apostles. Why do the false apostles boast, says he, that the Gospel of Peter was mighty, that he converted many, and that he wrought many and great miracles, raised up the dead, and with his shadow healed the sick (*Acts v. 15*)? I grant all these things to be true; but Peter received this power from heaven. The same power had I also, which I received not of Peter, but the same God and the same Spirit which was mighty in Peter was mighty in me also. I had the same grace: I taught many, I wrought many miracles, and through my shadow also I healed the sick. And this Luke testifies in these words: "And God wrought no small miracles by the hands of Paul," etc. (*Acts xix. 11, 12*). Paul will be counted in no point inferior to the rest of the Apostles; and herein he glorieth with a godly and a holy pride. Necessity constrained him stoutly to withstand Peter; and the burning zeal which he had for the glory of God moved him so to do. Certain profane spirits, not considering this, thought it to be but a carnal pride that caused Paul thus to do. But Paul had here not his own business in hand, but a matter of faith. Now, as concerning faith, we ought to be invincible, and more hard, than the adamant stone; but, as touching charity, we ought to be soft, and more flexible than the reed or leaf that is shaken with the wind, and ready to yield to everything. Therefore the controversy was not here touching the glory of Paul, but the glory of God, the Word of God, the true worship of God, true religion, and the righteousness of faith, to the end that these might still remain pure and uncorrupt.

Lord, grant that we e'er pure retain
The catechismal doctrine plain,
As Luther taught the heavenly truth
In simple words to tender youth.

February 13

> And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. *Gal. ii. 9.*

* * *

Paul says: When they heard that I had received my calling and charge from God to preach the Gospel among the Gentiles, and that God had wrought so many miracles by me; moreover, that so great a number of the Gentiles were come to the knowledge of Christ through my ministry, and that the Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost, without the law and circumcision, solely and alone by the preaching of faith—Peter, James and John glorified God for this grace which was given unto me. They perceived that by the grace of God, from a waster and persecutor of the Church I was made an Apostle, was taught by Jesus Christ, and enriched with spiritual gifts. Here Paul shows that Peter, James, and John not only acknowledged his ministry and authority and the gifts of the Spirit which were in him, as heavenly gifts, but also approved and confirmed the same, yet not as superiors and rulers, but as brothers and witnesses. They who are esteemed as chief pillars among the Apostles are wholly with him and not against him. As if they would say: In doctrine we are companions, and have fellowship together therein; we have all one doctrine, for we preach one Gospel, one baptism, one Christ, and one faith. Only to you is committed the Gospel over the uncircumcision, as the Gospel over the circumcision is unto us. But neither uncircumcision nor circumcision ought to hinder our society and fellowship, since it is but one Gospel, which we both preach.

> One family we dwell in Him,
> One Church above, beneath;
> Though now divided by the stream—
> The narrow stream of death.

February 14

Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do. *Gal. ii. 10.*

* * *

After the preaching of the Gospel, the office and charge of a true and faithful pastor is to be mindful of the poor. For where the Church is there must needs be the poor, who for the most part are the only true disciples of the Gospel, as Christ says: "The poor receive the glad tidings of the Gospel" *(Isa. lxi. 1; Matt. xi. 5; Luke iv. 26)*, for the world and the devil do persecute the Church, and bring many to poverty, who are afterwards forsaken and despised of the world. Moreover, the world not only offends in this respect, but is careless also concerning the preservation of the Gospel, true religion, and the true service of God. There is none that will now take care for the maintenance of the true ministers of God's Word and the erecting of schools where His Word is taught, but for the erecting and establishment of false worship, superstition, and idolatry, no cost is spared; every man is ready to give most liberally and largely. True religion is ever in need. Christ complains that He is hungry, thirsty, harborless, naked, and sick *(Matt. xxv. 35)*. Wherefore a true and faithful pastor must have a care of the poor also, and this care Paul here confessed that he had.

Lord, lead the way the Savior went,
By lane and cell obscure,
And let love's treasures still be spent,
Like His, upon the poor.
Like Him thro' scenes of deep distress,
Who bore the world's sad weight,
We, in their crowded loneliness,
Would seek the desolate.

February 15

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. *Gal. ii. 11.*

* * *

Paul goes on still in his confutation, saying "that he not only has for his defense the testimony of Peter, and the other Apostles which were at Jerusalem, but also that he withstood Peter in the presence of the whole church of Antioch," for, as said before, he had here no trifling matter in hand, but the chief article of all Christian doctrine, compared to which, when esteemed rightly, all other things shall seem vile; for what is Peter, what is Paul, what is an angel from heaven, what are all other creatures to the article of justification? for faith in this doctrine brings us unto clear light, but ignorance of the same leaves us in miserable darkness. Wherefore, if we see this article impugned or defaced, fear not to resist either Peter or an angel from heaven, following the example of Paul, who, seeing the majesty of this article to be in danger for the dignity of Peter, had no regard for his dignity in order to keep this doctrine pure and uncorrupt. We are not ashamed, for the defense of the truth, to be counted and called by the hypocrites, proud and obstinate, such as will be only-wise, will hear none, will give place to none. Here we must needs be obstinate. Here if I give no place to my parents, to the magistrate, or an angel from heaven, I do well. For what is the creature compared to the Creator? Diligently weigh and consider the matter whereof Paul entreats, for he entreats of the Word of God, which can never be magnified enough. The words, "to his face," are especially directed against the venomous vipers and apostles of Satan, which slander those that are absent and in their presence dare not once open their mouth, as the false apostles did. "So did not I speak of Peter (Paul says), but frankly and openly I withstood him, because he was to be blamed."

Raised from he dead, we live anew;
And justified by grace,
We shall appear in glory too,
And see our Father's face.

February 16

For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. *Gal. ii. 12.*

* * *

The Gentiles which were converted to the faith did eat meats forbidden by the law; and Peter being conversant with the Gentiles which were converted, did eat with them, knowing that herein he did well, and therefore boldly transgressed the law with the Gentiles. Paul confessed that he did the same, when he said "that he became a Jew to the Jews, and to them that were without law, as though he were without law." Wherefore Peter, in eating and drinking with the Gentiles, sinned not, but did well, and knew that it was lawful for him to do so, for he showed by this transgression that the law was not necessary to righteousness, and also delivered the Gentiles from the observation of the law. And Paul does not here reprove Peter for his transgression, but for his dissimulation, in that when the Jews which came from James were present, he abstained from meats forbidden in the law, fearing lest the Jews should be offended thereby. To eat meats prohibited in the law is not evil, but this shrinking and dissimulation of Peter is evil, for it might be said: Peter abstaineth from meats forbidden in the law, wherefore if you do not likewise abstain, you cannot be saved. The truth of the Gospel was here in danger, for of the law often comes faith in works, and where that is there can be no trust in Christ. Therefore Paul was justified in resisting Peter.

Run the straight race
Through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes, and seek His face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

February 17

> And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. *Gal. ii. 13.*

* * *

If Peter dissembled, then he certainly knew what was the truth and what was not. And Paul says: Others dissembled likewise with Peter, insomuch that Barnabas also was brought into their dissimulation, which would afterwards have been an occasion of the ruin of the Gospel, then newly received, if Paul had not resisted Peter. It is a wonderful matter, that God preserved the Church, being yet but young, and the Gospel itself, by one person. Paul alone stood up for the truth; for he had lost Barnabas, his companion, and Peter was against him. So sometimes one man is able to do more in a council than the whole council besides. This is said to the end that we should diligently learn the article of justification, and make a plain difference between the Law and the Gospel, and that in this matter we should do nothing by dissimulation, or give place to any man, if we will retain the truth of the Gospel, and faith sound and uncorrupt. Nothing fights more strongly against faith than reason and the Law, and these two enemies must be conquered. Wherefore, when thy conscience is terrified with the Law, and wrestles with the judgment of God, ask counsel neither of reason nor of the Law, but rest only upon grace and the Word of consolation, and so stand as if you had never heard anything of the Law. It is to be marveled that such excellent men as Peter, Barnabas, and others should so suddenly and so lightly fall, especially in that which they knew so well, and had also before taught to others. Thus we see that we are nothing with all our gifts, except God assist us. When He leaves us to ourselves, our wisdom and knowledge is nothing.

> Make me to walk in Thy commands—
> 'Tis a delightful road;
> Nor let my head, or heart, or hands,
> Offend against my God.

February 18

But when I saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the Gospel. *Gal. ii. 14a.*

* * *

There is none but Paul who has his eyes open and sees the offense of Peter, of Barnabas, and the other Jews which dissemble with Peter. On their part, they do not see their own offense; nay, they rather think that they do well in bearing with the infirmities of the weak Jews. It is a great matter that Peter should be accused of Paul as one that was fallen from the truth of the Gospel. He could not be more grievously reprehended. Yet he suffered it patiently; and no doubt, he gladly acknowledged his offense; for, though they preached the Gospel, through their dissimulation they established the Law; but the establishment of the Law is the abolishing of the Gospel. Now the way to discern the one from the other is to place the Gospel in heaven and the Law on the earth; to call the righteousness of the Gospel heavenly, and the righteousness of the Law earthly, and to put as great difference between the righteousness of the Law as God hath made between heaven and earth, between day and night. Wherefore, if the question be concerning the matter of faith or conscience, let us utterly exclude the Law, but if we have to do with works, let us lighten the lantern of works and the righteousness of the Law. If the conscience be terrified with the sense and feeling of sin, think thus: I will know nothing at all of the Law or works thereof, but will only look to the remission of sins and the pure righteousness offered and freely given unto us in Christ. Contrariwise, in civil policy, obedience to the Law must be severely required; when external duties must be done, then we must follow our vocation and the works thereof.

Blest is the man, forever blest,
Whose guilt is pardoned by his God,
Whose sins with sorrow are confessed,
And covered with his Savior's blood.

February 19

> I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? *Gal. ii. 14b.*

* * *

Paul says openly to Peter: You are a Jew, and therefore are bound to live like a Jew, that is, to abstain from meats forbidden in the Law. Notwithstanding, you live like a Gentile, that is, you do contrary to the Law, for, as a Gentile, which is free from the Law, you eat common and unclean meats; and you do well to do so. But by abstaining from these meats when you are in the presence of the brethren converted from the Jewish religion, you compel these Jews likewise to keep the Law, and you give occasion to the Gentiles to think: Peter abstains from those meats which the Gentiles used to eat, and which he himself ate, therefore we ought likewise to avoid the same, otherwise we cannot be justified or saved. We see, then, that Paul reproves not ignorance in Peter (for he knew that he might freely eat with Gentiles all manner of meats), but his dissimulation, which compels the Gentiles to live like the Jews. To live as the Jew is not evil in itself, for it is an indifferent thing whether we eat swine's flesh or any other meats. But if for conscience' sake we abstain from certain meats, this is to deny Christ and to overthrow the Gospel. Therefore when Paul saw that Peter's act tended to this end, he withstood him. Since, then, it is so dangerous a thing to have to do with the Law, let every Christian diligently learn to discern between the Law and the Gospel. Let him suffer the Law to rule over the body and the members thereof, but not over the conscience.

> Christ Jesus is the ground of faith,
> Who was made flesh and suffered death;
> Are built on this chief Corner-stone.
> All that confide in Him alone

February 20

We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles. *Gal. ii. 15.*

* * *

That is to say, the Jews are born unto the righteousness of the Law, to Moses, and to circumcision. They have the righteousness of the Law by nature. Compared with the Gentiles, they are not sinners, they are not without Law and without works. They are born righteous and brought up in righteousness. Their righteousness begins even with birth. It is a great matter that they are Jews by nature, born to the Law and to the works thereof. Notwithstanding that they have this prerogative, they are therefore not righteous before God. Though they be born holy, be circumcised, keep the Law, have the adoption, the glory, the covenant, the fathers, the true worship, God, Christ, the promises, live in them and glory in the same, none of all these is faith in Christ, which alone justifies, and not the Law. Not that the Law is evil or damnable, for the Law, circumcision, and the like, are not condemned because they do not justify, but Paul takes from them the office of justification, because the false apostles contended that by them, without faith, and only by the works wrought, men are justified and saved. This Paul would not suffer, for without faith all things are deadly. The Law, circumcision, the adoption, the temple, the worship of God, the promises, yea, God and Christ Himself, without faith, profiteth nothing. Paul speaks in general against all things which are contrary to faith.

Lord, I believe were sinners more
Than sands upon the ocean shore,
Thou hast for all a ransom paid,
For all a full atonement made.

February 21

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. *Gal. ii. 16a.*

* * *

This word (the work of the Law) reaches far and comprehends much. We take the work of the Law therefore generally for that which is contrary to grace. Whatsoever is not grace, is the Law, whether it be judicial, ceremonial, or the Ten Commandments. Wherefore if thou couldest do the works of the Law according to this commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc. (which no man yet ever did or could do), yet would you not be justified before God: for a man is not justified by the works of the Law. The work of the Law, then, according to Paul, signifies the work of the whole Law, whether it be judicial, ceremonial, or moral. Now, if the work of the moral Law does not justify, much less does circumcision justify, which is a work of the ceremonial Law. Wherefore, when Paul says (as he often does), "that a man is not justified by the Law, or by the works of the Law" (which are both one), he speaks generally of the whole Law, setting the righteousness of faith against the righteousness of the whole Law. "For by the righteousness of the Law," says he, "a man is not pronounced righteous before God: but the righteousness of faith God imputes freely through grace, for Christ's sake." The Law, no doubt, is holy, righteous, and good: yet, notwithstanding, a man is not justified thereby before God.

By grace! our works are all rejected,
All claims of merit pass for naught;
The mighty Savior, long expected,
To us this blissful truth has brought,
That He by death redeems our race,
And we are saved alone by grace.

February 22

> Even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law; for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. *Gal. ii. 16b.*

* * *

This is the true meaning of becoming a Christian, even to be justified by faith in Jesus Christ, and not by the works of the Law—not that faith justifies when charity and good works are joined withal. When a man hears that he ought to believe in Christ, and yet, notwithstanding, believes that faith does not justify unless it is formed and furnished with charity, by and by he falls from faith, and thinks: If faith without charity does not justify, then faith is vain and unprofitable and charity alone justifies, for unless faith be formed with charity, it is nothing. To support this view, the adversaries of Paul allege: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity . . . . I am nothing." But they are men without understanding. By this false interpretation they have not only perverted the words of Paul, but have also denied Christ and buried all His benefits. We grant that we must teach also good works and charity, but it must be done in time and in place, that is to say, when the question is concerning works and does not touch the article of justification. Here the question is, By what means are we justified and how do we attain eternal life? To this we answer with Paul, that by faith in Christ alone are we pronounced righteous, and not by the works of the Law or charity. We do not reject good works, but we will not suffer ourselves to be removed from this stronghold of our salvation, which Satan most desires. Victory over sin and death, salvation, and everlasting life, come by the Lord Jesus Christ only and alone.

> All that I am, e'en here on earth,
> All that I hope to be
> When Jesus comes and glory dawns,
> I owe it, Lord, to Thee.

February 23

> But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. *Gal. ii. 17.*

* * *

If this be true, says Paul, that we are justified by Christ, then it is impossible that we should be sinners, or should be justified by the Law. On the contrary, if this be not true, but that we must be justified by the Law, and the works of the Law, then it is impossible that we should be justified by Christ. Either we are not justified by Christ, or we are not justified by the Law. But the truth is that we are justified by Christ, therefore we are not justified by the Law. The truth of the Gospel teaches us that a man is not justified in the Law, but in Christ. Now, if they that are justified in Christ are yet found sinners, that is, do yet still belong to the Law, and are under the Law (as the false apostles teach), then are they not yet justified, for the Law accuses them and shows them to be yet sinners, and requires of them the works of the Law as necessary to their justification. But we know and believe that Christ is a Justifier and a Redeemer from sins. If I attribute this to the Law, then is the Law my justifier, delivering me from sins because I do the works thereof; so then the Law is Christ, and Christ loses His name, His office, and His glory. A minister of sin is nothing else but a lawgiver, or a schoolmaster of the Law, which teaches good works and charity. The proper office of Christ is, after the Law has pronounced a man to be guilty, to raise him up again and to loose him from his sins, if he believe the Gospel. For to all that believe, "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth." "He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world" *(Rom. x.4; John i.30).*

I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God;
He bears them all and frees us
From the accursed load.

February 24

For if I build again the things which I destroyed,
I make myself a transgressor. *Gal. ii. 18.*

* * *

Paul would here say: I have not preached to this end, that I might build again those things which I once destroyed. If so, I should not only labor in vain, but should make myself also a transgressor and overthrow all together, as the false apostles do, and make of grace and of Christ the Law and Moses, and contrariwise, of the Law and Moses I should make grace and Christ. Now, by the ministry of the Gospel I have abolished sin, heaviness of heart, wrath, and death. I have taught that the conscience of man is subject to the Law, sin, and death, from which man cannot be delivered either by men or angels. But that there is remission of sins by Jesus Christ, who has abolished the Law and has destroyed sin and death: whoever believes in Him shall be delivered from the curse of the Law and from the tyranny of sin and death; he shall become righteous and have eternal life. By the preaching of the Gospel I have distroyed the Law, to the end that it should not reign in the conscience any more. For when the new guest, Christ Jesus, comes into the new house, there to dwell alone. Moses, the old inhabitor, must give place unto Him and depart somewhere else. Also where Christ, the new Guest, is come to dwell, there dwells mere grace, righteousness, joy, life, and true faith in the Father, who is now reconciled unto us, gracious, long-suffering, and full of mercy for His Son Jesus Christ's sake. Should I then drive out Christ and destroy His kingdom, which I have planted through the preaching of the Gospel, and build up again the Law and set up the kingdom of Moses? This I would do if I would teach circumcision and the observation of the Law to be necessary to salvation.

Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.

February 25

For I through the law am dead to the Law, that I might live unto God. *Gal. ii. 19.*

* * *

These are marvelous words, and unknown kinds of speech, which man's reason can in nowise understand. Paul speaks with great zeal and vehemency of spirit; in great displeasure, as it were. Why do you boast so much of the Law? he would say. Of this I would be ignorant. But if you will needs have the Law, I also have the Law. As though moved through indignation of the Holy Ghost, he calls grace itself the Law, giving a new name to the effect and working of grace, in contempt of the Law of Moses and the false apostles, which contended that the Law was necessary to justification: he sets the Law against the Law. As if he would say: The Law of Moses accuses and condemns me, but against that accusing and condemning Law, I have another law, which is grace and liberty. This law accuses the accusing Law, and condemns the condemning Law. So death kills death: but this killing death is life itself. And here Paul seems to be a heretic, yea, of all heretics the greatest. For he says that he, being dead to the Law, lives to God. The false apostles taught: Except you live to the Law, you are dead to God. Paul says here quite the contrary: Except you be dead to the Law, you cannot live to God. Man's wisdom does not understand this doctrine, therefore it always teaches the contrary. Wherefore we must mount above our wisdom to this heavenly altitude, that we may be assured that we are far above the Law, yea, that we are utterly dead unto the Law. All these things tend to this end, that we are not justified by the Law, but by faith only in Jesus Christ.

Fain we would on Thee rely,
Cast on Thee our sin and care:
To Thine arms of mercy fly,
Find our lasting quiet there.

February 26

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. *Gal. ii. 20a.*

* * *

Not only, says Paul, am I dead to the Law through the law, that I may live to God, but I am also crucified with Christ. But Christ is Lord over the Law, because He is crucified and dead unto the Law, therefore am I also Lord over the Law, for I likewise am crucified and dead unto the Law, inasmuch as I am crucified and dead with Christ. By what means? By grace and faith. Through this faith that I am now crucified and dead unto the Law, therefore the Law loses all its power which it had over me, even as it has lost all its power which it had over Christ. Being now crucified with Christ in spirit, I am crucified and dead to the Law, sin, death, and the devil, so that they have no further power over me. I speak not so of my death and crucifying as though I now lived not; yea, I live, for I am quickened by His death and crucifying, through the which I died, that is, forasmuch as I am delivered from the Law, sin, and death, I now live indeed. But I live not now in my own person, but Christ lives in me. But who is this I of whom he says, "Yet not I"? This I is he which has the Law and is bound to do the works thereof, who also is a certain person separate from Christ. This person Paul rejects. For as he is separate from Christ, he belongs to death and hell. Therefore he says: Now not I, but Christ lives in me. Christ therefore, says, he, thus joined and united unto me, and abiding in me, lives this life in me which I now live; yea, Christ Himself is this life which I now live.

Jesus! I live to Thee,
The loveliest and best;
My life in Thee, Thy life in me,
In Thy blest love I rest.

February 27

> And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me. *Gal. ii. 20b.*

* * *

Here we have the true manner of justification set before our eyes, and a perfect example of the assurance of faith. He that can, with a firm and constant faith, say these words of Paul is happy indeed. It was not I then that first loved the Son of God and delivered myself for Him. They who imagine that they do what lies in them, and therefore love God and deliver themselves for Christ, what else do they do but abolish the Gospel, deride, deny, and blaspheme Christ? They confess in word that He is a Justifier and Savior, but in deed they take from Him the very power both to justify and to save, and give the same to their own will-works, their ceremonies, and devotions. This is to live in their own righteousness and works, and not in the faith of the Son of God. Paul says here that Christ first began, and not we. He found in me no good will or right understanding, but this good Lord had mercy upon me. He saw me going astray, contemning God, and flying from Him more and more; yea, rebelling against God, taken, led, and carried away captive of the devil. Thus of His mere mercy, preventing my reason, my will, and my understanding, He loved me, and so loved me, that He gave Himself for me, to the end that I might be freed from the Law, sin, the devil, and death. It is a horrible blasphemy to imagine that there is any work whereby we might presume to pacify God, since we see that there is nothing which is able to pacify Him but this inestimable price, even the death and blood of the Son of God, one drop whereof is more precious than the whole world.

He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all,
He saved me from my lost estate—
His loving-kindness, O how great!

February 28

I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain. *Gal. ii. 21.*

* * *

Here we must diligently consider that to seek to be justified by the works of the Law is to reject the grace of God. And what sin can be more execrable or horrible than to reject the grace of God and to refuse that righteousness which comes by Christ? It is enough and too much already that we are wicked sinners and transgressors of all the commandments of God; and yet we commit, moreover, the most execrable sin of all, when we most contemptuously refuse the grace of God and remission of sins offered unto us by Christ. There is no sin which Paul and the other Apostles did so much detest as the contempt of grace and denial of Christ, and yet there is no sin more common. Do we then sin in keeping the Law? No, but we despise grace when we observe the Law to this end, that we may be justified through it. And yet, all the world does so, although it does not wish so to be judged, but pretends to do high service and honor to God. *For if righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain.* If then He suffered not in vain, it follows of necessity that righteousness comes not by the Law. Now, if my salvation was so costly and dear a price unto Christ, that He was constrained to die for my sins, then all my works, with all the righteousness of the Law, are but vile, and nothing worth in comparison to this inestimable price.

Thy grace alone, O God,
To me can pardon speak;
Thy power alone, O Son of God,
Can this sore bondage break.

February 29

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth? *Gal. iii. 1a.*

* * *

Now, after Paul has sufficiently proved and confirmed this article, that Christian righteousness comes not by the Law, but by faith in Christ, and withal has confuted the doctrine of the false apostles, in the midst of this discourse, he turns his talk to the Galatians, and reproves them, saying: O, ye foolish Galatians! As if he would say, from whence are ye fallen! I have most carefully and diligently taught you the truth of the Gospel, and you also have received the same of me with fervent zeal and great diligence. How then is it come to pass that you are so suddenly fallen away from it? Who hath bewitched you? Here Paul excuses the Galatians and lays the fault upon the false apostles. As though he would say, I see that you are not fallen through wilfulness or malice, but the devil has sent the enchanting false apostles, his children, amongst you, and they do so bewitch you in teaching you that you are justified by the Law, that now you think otherwise of Christ than you did before, when you heard the Gospel preached by me. But we labor both by preaching and writing unto you, to uncharm that sorcery wherewith the false apostles have bewitched you, and to set at liberty those which are snared therewith. This bewitching then and this sorcery is nothing else but a plain illusion of the devil, printing in the heart a false opinion of Christ, and against Christ. Paul uses this word, "bewitching" in contempt of the false apostles, which so vehemently urged the doctrine of the Law and works. For (Paul would say) as the senses are perverted by bodily witchcraft, so are the minds of men also deluded by this spiritual witchcraft.

Abiding, steadfast, firm, and sure,
The teachings of the Word endure:
Blest he who trusts this steadfast Word,
His anchor holds in Christ, the Lord.

March 1

Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? *Gal. iii. 1b.*

* * *

It was bitterly spoken where he said before that they were so bewitched that they could not obey the truth: but it is more bitterly said, when he adds that Christ was so lively described before them that they might handle Him with their hands, and yet they would not obey the truth. You are so bewitched and deluded with the devilish opinions of the false apostles that now you will not obey the truth, and although I have with great travail and diligence set forth Christ plainly before your eyes, you are not at all profited.—*Crucified among you.* He uses here very rough and sharp words. Before, he said that they sought righteousness by the Law, rejected the grace of God, and that to them Christ died in vain. Now, he adds, moreover, that they crucify Christ, who before lived and reigned in them. As if he would say, You have now not only rejected the grace of God, not only to you did Christ die in vain, but now He is shamefully crucified among you. As he also says *(Heb. vi.)*: "Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." The Apostle therefore is inflamed with a vehement zeal, and with bitter words he reproves and condemns the presumption of man's own righteousness, and charges it with this impiety, that it crucifies again the Son of God. Seeing, then, that it is so dangerous a thing, therefore he uses such sharp words against it, so that he spares not the very Law of God. Although the Law is holy, just, and good, yet it must here appear just as if it were a hypocrite, seeking to be justified by works.

But since my own strength never will suffice me
To crucify desires that still entice me,
To all good deeds, O let Thy Spirit win me,
And reign within me!

March 2

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith? *Gal. iii. 2.*

* * *

Paul speaks these words with a certain indignation and contempt of the false prophets. If I had nothing else against you but your own experience, he says, I would have enough. Their own experience is against them: they had received the Holy Ghost, not by works of the Law, but by the preaching of the Gospel. He reminds them: As long as you were under the Law, and did the works thereof, you never received the Holy Ghost. Indeed, you taught and heard the Law of Moses every Sabbath, but it has not been seen or heard that the Holy Ghost was ever given to any person, either doctor or disciple, through the preaching of the Law. Moreover, you have not only taught and heard the Law, but you have also labored with all your power to perform the same by your works, whereby you should surely have received the Holy Ghost, if He had been given by the Law, seeing you were not only teachers and hearers, but also doers of the Law, and yet you cannot show me that this was done at any time. But, as Luke witnesses in the Acts, at the preaching of Peter and Paul, "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the Word" *(Acts x. 44)*; and "When they heard this they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied" *(Acts xix.5, 6)*. It is manifest that only by the preaching of faith you received the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, the accomplishing of the Law never brought the Holy Ghost; much less could the hearing only of the Law do it. Therefore not only the hearing of the Law, but that affection and zeal also, whereby you go about to accomplish the Law by your works, are vain and unprofitable, as far as justification is concerned.

'Tis through the purchase of His death
Who hung upon the tree,
The Spirit is sent down to breathe
On such dry bones as we.

March 3

Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? *Gal. iii.* 3.

* * *

Now Paul begins to exhort and terrify them from a double danger or evil result. Paul here sets the Spirit against the flesh. When speaking of the flesh here, Paul does not mean fleshly lust, beastly passions; or sensual appetites, but the righteousness and wisdom of the flesh and the judgment of reason, which seeks to be justified by the Law. Paul tells them, You end, yea rather, are ended in the flesh, for the righteousness of the Law (which Paul here calls the flesh) is so far from justifying, that they which, after receiving the Holy Spirit through the hearing of faith, fall back again unto it, are ended in it, that is to say, are utterly destroyed. Therefore whosoever teaches that the Law ought to be fulfilled to this end, that men might be justified thereby, while they seek to quiet their consciences, hurt them, and while they would justify, condemn them. Paul always has in mind the false apostles, for they continued to urge that faith only in Christ does not take away sin, does not pacify the wrath of God, does not justify. If you wish to be free from sin, from the wrath of God, from everlasting death, they say, you must not only believe in Christ, but you must also keep the Law, be circumcised, keep the feasts, etc. Yea rather, Paul says, by these self-same things you establish unrighteousness, you provoke the wrath of God, you add sin to sin, you quench the Spirit, you fall away from grace, and utterly reject the same, and you, together with your disciples, end in the flesh. This is the first danger from which Paul terrifies the Galatians, lest, if they seek to be justified by the Law, they lose the Spirit, and forego their good beginnings for a wretched end.

Salvation unto us has come
By God's free grace and favor,
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never:
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is the Mediator.

March 4

Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain? *Gal. iii. 4.*

* * *

The other danger or evil result is this: Have you suffered so many things in vain? Consider, he says, how well you began and how miserably you have forsaken your good beginning and your course well begun. Consider that you have suffered much, for the Gospel's sake and for the name of Christ: the spoiling of your goods, railing, reproaches, dangers both of bodies and of lives. All things were in a happy course; you taught purely, you lived holily, and you endured many evils constantly for the name of Christ. But now all is lost, both doctrine as well as faith; doing as well as suffering; the Spirit as well as the fruits thereof. Here is shown sufficiently the unspeakable benefits which those lose who trust in the righteousness of the Law. What a miserable thing it is to so suddenly lose such inestimable glory and assurance of conscience towards God; also to endure so many great and grievous afflictions, as loss of goods, wife, children, body and life, and yet, notwithstanding, to sustain all these things in vain! On the one side are the glory of God, victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, righteousness, and everlasting life; on the other side, desperation, eternal death, and hell. *If it be yet in vain.* These words Paul adds as a correction, whereby he mitigates the reprehension that goes before, which was somewhat sharp. He is constrained to speak, somewhat roughly in this matter; he must be fervent in the defense thereof and be somewhat sharp in chiding, because the matter is so weighty, lest they should think it is but a trifle to reject the doctrine of Paul and receive another. But he wishes them to repent and amend; he wishes to cure their infirmity; therefore does not handle them too sharply, lest they fall into desperation.

In vain would boasting reason find
The path to happiness and God;
Her weak directions leave the mind
Bewildered in a doubtful road.

March 5

He therefore that ministereth to you in the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith? *Gal. iii. 5.*

* * *

This argument, grounded upon the experience of the Galatians, Paul likes so well, that after he has reproved and terrified them, setting before them a double danger, he now repeats the same. He now says, You have not only received the Spirit by the hearing of faith, but whatsoever you have either known or done, it came by the hearing of faith. The same God that gave you the Spirit, has also enriched you with the gifts of the Spirit, and increased the same in you, to the end that, having once received the Spirit, it might always grow and be more effectual in you. Hereby it is plain that the Galatians had wrought miracles, or at least, had showed such fruits of faith as the true disciples of the Gospel are wont to bring forth. For Paul says in another place (*I Cor. iv. 20*): "The kingdom of God is not in word but in power." Now this power is not only to be able to speak of the kingdom of God; but also in very deed to show that God, through His Spirit, is effectual in us. As Paul said in the second chapter of himself: "He that was effectual in Peter among the Jews was also effectual in me." As though he would say, God has not only brought to pass through my preaching that you should believe, but also that you should live holily, bring forth many fruits of faith, and suffer many afflictions. All these are the effects and fruits of the Spirit, and these you received and enjoyed before these false teachers came among you. But you received them not by the Law, but of God, who so ministered unto you, and daily increased in you His Holy Spirit, that the Gospel had a most happy course among you, in teaching, believing, working, and suffering.

It (the Gospel) is the power of God to save
From sin and Satan and the grave;
It works the faith which firmly clings
To all the treasures which it brings.

March 6

Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. *Gal. iii. 6.*

* * *

Paul now adds the example of Abraham and rehearses the testimony of the Scripture. The first is out of Gen. xv. 6: "Abraham believed God," etc. Now, Abraham was justified before God, not because he did work, but because he did believe. Abraham, says he, was not weak in the faith, neither considered he his own body which was now dead, being almost an hundred years old; neither the deadness of Sarah's womb; neither did he doubt of the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in the faith, and gave glory to God, being fully assured, that whatsoever God had promised, He was able to do. Paul by these words, "Abraham believed," makes faith in God the chief worship, the chief duty, the chief obedience, the chief sacrifice, for it gives glory to God, which is the highest service that can be given unto Him. Now, to give glory unto God is to believe in Him, to count Him true, wise, righteous, merciful, almighty—briefly, to acknowledge Him to be the Author and Giver of all goodness. This reason does not, but faith. Whosoever then believes the Word of God, as Abraham did, is righteous before God, because he has faith. For faith says thus, I believe Thee, O God, when Thou speakest. And what says God? Impossible things, lies, foolish, weak absurd, abominable, heretical, and devilish things, if we consult reason. Follow not the judgment of reason, which tells you that God is angry with sinners, but kill reason and believe in Christ. If you believe, you are righteous, because you give glory to God; you yield unto Him His divinity and whatsoever else belongs unto Him. And the sin which remains in you is not laid to your charge, but is pardoned for Christ's sake, in whom you believe, who is perfectly just, whose righteousness is your righteousness, and your sin, His sin.

Just as I am Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

March 7

Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. *Gal. iii. 7.*

* * *

This is the general argument and whole disputation of Paul against the Jews, that they which *believe* are the children of Abraham, and not they which are born of his flesh and his blood (*Rom. ix. 7, 8*). This disputation Paul emphasizes, for the greatest confidence and glory of the Jews was: "We are the seed and children of Abraham. He was circumcised and kept the Law, therefore, if we will be the true children of Abraham, we must follow our father," etc. It was no doubt an excellent glory and dignity to be the seed of Abraham, for no man could deny that God spake to the seed and of the seed of Abraham. But this prerogative did not profit the *unbelieving* Jews. For this reason Paul strives against this argument, and wrests from the Jews this strong affiance in themselves. Thus Paul reasons against the Jews: You say, "We are the seed of Abraham. Abraham was circumcised and kept the Law; we do the same." All this I grant, but will you therefore look to be justified and saved? Not so. But let us come to the Patriarch Abraham himself, and let us see by what means he was justified and saved. Doubtless, not for his excellent virtues and holy works, not because he was circumcised and kept the Law, but because he *believed*. Wherefore he was not justified by any other means than by faith alone. Since this is true by the testimony of Scripture, why do you stand so upon circumcision and the Law, contending that you have righteousness and salvation thereby, whereas Abraham himself, your father, your fountain and headspring, in whom you glory so much, was justified and saved without these, by faith alone?

Ye seed of Israel's chosen race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him, who saves you by His grace,
And crown Him Lord of all!

March 8

> And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. *Gal. iii. 8.*

* * *

These things pertain to the former argument. As though Paul would say: You Jews glory in the Law above measure; you highly commend Moses because God spoke unto him in the burning bush. But this your proud boasting is to no purpose; for the Scripture prevented it, and foresaw long before the Law that the Gentiles should not be justified by the Law but by the blessing of Abraham's Seed, which was promised unto Him four hundred and thirty years before the Law was given. The false apostles advanced the Law and the glory thereof, but the promise made unto Abraham four hundred and thirty years before the Law was given, they neglected and despised, and would in nowise admit that Abraham, being yet uncircumcised, and living so many ages before the Law, was made righteous by no other means than by faith alone. But the Scriptures plainly witness: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." Afterwards, when he was already accounted righteous because of his faith, the Scriptures makes mention of circumcision (*Gen. xvii. 10*). Paul thus convinces the false apostles and shows plainly that Abraham was justified by faith only, both without and before circumcision, and also four hundred and thirty years before the Law. And the inheritance of the Gentiles was given unto Abraham, not by the Law and circumcision, but long before the same, by the righteousness of faith alone.

The ancient Law departs,
And all its terrors cease;
For Jesus makes with faithful hearts
A covenant of peace.

March 9

So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. *Gal. iii. 9.*

* * *

All the weight and force of this passage lies in the words, "With faithful Abraham." For he puts a plain difference between Abraham and Abraham. As if we said, There is a working and a believing Abraham. With the working Abraham we have nothing to do, for if he is justified by works, he may rejoice, but not with God. Let the Jews glory as much as they will of that begetting Abraham which is a worker, which is circumcised, and keeps the Law; but we glory in the faithful Abraham, of whom the Scripture says that he received the blessing of righteousness through his faith, not only for himself, but also for all those which believe as he did. Therefore all the world is blessed; that is to say, receives imputation of righteousness, if it believes as Abraham did. Wherefore the blessing is nothing else but the promise of the Gospel It was indeed a great glory that Abraham received circumcision at the commandment of God, that he was endued with excellent virtues, that he obeyed God in all things, as it is also great virtue to follow the example of Christ working, to love your neighbor, to pray for your enemies; but all this avails nothing toward righteousness before God. Paul speaks here of Christ redeeming and Abraham believing, and not of Christ giving example or of Abraham working.

Look unto Him, ye nations; own
Your God, ye fallen race;
Look, and be saved through faith alone
Be justified by grace.

March 10

> For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them. *Gal. iii. 10.*

* * *

Here we see that the curse is, as it were, a flood swallowing up whatsoever is without Abraham; that is to say, without faith and the promise of the blessing of Abraham. Now, if the Law itself, given by Moses at the commandment of God, makes them subject to the curse which are under it, much more shall the laws and traditions so do, which are devised by man. He, therefore, that will avoid the curse, must lay hold upon the promise of blessing, or upon the faith of Abraham, or else he shall remain under the curse. Upon this place "shall be blessed in thee," it follows that all nations, whether they were before Abraham, in his time, or after him, are accursed, and shall abide under the curse forever, unless they be blessed in the faith of Abraham, unto whom the promise of the blessing was given to be published by his seed throughout the whole world. Here nothing is handled as touching civil laws, manners, or matters political (which are the ordinances of God, and good things, and the Scripture elsewhere approves and commends the same), but of a spiritual righteousness, by which we are justified before God and are called the children of God. This spiritual righteousness, excluding the Law and all works, looks only unto the grace and blessing which is given by Christ, as it was promised to Abraham and of him believed. Now, if we hope to receive this blessing by Christ alone, then it follows necessarily that it is not received by the Law. They, therefore, which are under the Law are not blessed, but remain under the curse.

Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse remove;
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
And sing His bleeding love.

March 11

> But that no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. *Gal. iii. 11.*

* * *

Those who are always ready to corrupt the Scriptures, Paul says, wrest and pervert this passage in this manner: The just man does live by faith, that is to say, by a working faith, or formed and made perfect with charity; but if it be not formed and made perfect with charity, then it does not justify. They speak of faith formed and made perfect with charity, and make a double faith, that is to say, formed and unformed. Although, say they, we have faith infused, which is the gift of the Holy Ghost, and is also gotten by our own industry, yet both of them lack their form and perfection, which is charity, and are formed with charity. This is to prefer charity before faith, and to attribute righteousness not to faith, but only in respect to charity; to faith they attribute nothing at all. But the Holy Ghost knows how to speak. He could have said: The righteous man shall live by faith, formed and beautified, or made perfect by charity. But this He purposely does not do, simply saying: The just shall live by faith. And we still hold to this faith, which God Himself calls faith, which doubts not God nor His promises that we have forgiveness of sins through Christ, that we may dwell sure and safe in this our object, Christ, and may still keep before our eyes the passion and blood of the Mediator and all His benefits.

> From faith in Christ, whene'er 'tis right,
> Good works are surely flowing;
> The faith is dead that shuns the light,
> No good works ever showing;
> By faith alone the just shall live,
> Good works alone the proof can give
> Of love, which true faith worketh.

March 12

And the Law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. *Gal. iii. 12.*

* * *

Paul here goes about to show what is the true righteousness of the Law and of the Gospel. The righteousness of the Law is to fulfill the Law, according to the saying, "The man that doeth them shall live in them." The righteousness of faith is to believe, according to the saying, "The just shall live by faith." The Law therefore requires that we give something to God; faith requires no works of us, or that we should give anything unto God, but that we, believing the promise of God, should receive of Him. The Law has its proper office; so has the promise. To the Law pertains doing, and to the promise believing. Wherefore, as far as the Law and the promise are separated, so far also are doing and believing. In this way Paul also separates charity from faith, to teach that charity does not justify, because the Law helps or works nothing to justification. Faith alone justifies and quickens. For the office of the Law is not to justify and give life, but to show forth sin and to destroy. Indeed the Law says, The man that doeth them shall live in them, but where is he who does what the Law commands, that is, loves God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself? Therefore a man does not live because of his doing, but because of his believing. But a believing man performs the Law, and that which he does not is forgiven him through the remission of sins for Christ's sake.

The Law reveals the guilt of sin
And makes man conscience-stricken;
The Gospel then doth enter in
The sinful soul to quicken.
Come to the Cross, trust Christ and live;
The Law to you no peace can give
With all its good endeavors.

March 13

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. *Gal. iii. 13.*

* * *

How may this sentence be applied to Christ, that He is accursed of God, and hanged upon a tree, seeing that He is no malefactor or thief, but righteous and holy? Let us see what the meaning and purpose of Paul is. The words of Paul plainly show that a distinction must be made. He does not say that Christ was made a curse for Himself, but *for us.* All the weight of the matter stands in this word, "for us." For Christ is innocent concerning His own person, and therefore He ought not to have been hanged upon a tree; but because, according to the Law of Moses, every thief and malefactor ought to be hanged, therefore Christ also, according to the Law, ought to be hanged, for He sustained the person of a sinner and a thief, not of one, but of all sinners and thieves. For we are sinners and thieves, and therefore guilty of death and everlasting damnation. But Christ took all our sins upon Him, and for them died upon the cross. And this, no doubt, all the Prophets foresaw in spirit, that Christ should become the greatest transgressor, murderer, thief, rebel, and blasphemer that ever was or could be in the world. For He, being made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, is not now an innocent person and without sins, but He has and bears all the sins of all men in His body, not that He Himself committed them, but that he received them, being committed by us, and laid them upon His own body, that He might make satisfaction for them with His own blood.

The sinless Son of God must die in sadness;
The sinful child of man may live in gladness;
Man forfeited his life, and is acquitted—
God is committed.

March 14

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ: that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. *Gal. iii. 14.*

* . * *

Paul has always these words before his eyes: "In thy Seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." For the blessing promised unto Abraham could not come upon the Gentiles except through Christ, the Seed of Abraham, and that by this means, that it behooved Him to be made a curse, that this promise made to Abraham might so be fulfilled. Therefore by no other means could this be done than is here promised, that Jesus Christ must needs become a curse, and join Himself to those that were accursed that He might take away the curse from them, and through His blessing might bring unto them righteousness and life. And here mark, that this word "blessing" is not in vain. Paul embraces in this word matters concerning sin and righteousness, of death and life before God. You see what merits we need and by what means we obtain the blessing. This is the merit we bring, these are the preparative works whereby we obtain this righteousness, that Christ Jesus was made a curse for us. There is no other way to avoid the curse but to believe, and with assured confidence to say: Christ is made a curse for us. The promise of the Spirit, which is freedom from the Law, sin, death, the curse, hell, and from the wrath and judgment of God, we receive by no other merits than by faith alone. For that only takes hold of the promises of God.

To Thee, Lord Jesus, thanks we give,
Who diedst for us, that we might live,
And through Thy holy precious blood
Hast made us righteous before God.

March 15

> Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. *Gal. iii. 15.*

* * *

After this principal and invincible argument, Paul adds another, grounded upon the similitude of a man's testament; which may seem to be very weak, and such as the Apostle ought not to use for the confirmation of a matter of so great importance. But civil ordinances are of God, for God has ordained them and allows them, as He does the sun, the moon, and other creatures. Therefore an argument taken of the ordinance of the creatures of God is good, if we use the same rightly. Our Savior argues from earthly things to heavenly things, when He says: "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Likewise Paul: We must obey men; therefore much more must we obey God. Paul argues: The civil law, which is an ordinance of God, says that it is not lawful to break or change the testament of a man. Yes, it commands that the last will and testament of a man be straitly kept; for it is one of the holiest and most laudable customs that are among men. Now, therefore, how does it come to pass that man is obeyed and not God? Politic and civil ordinances as concerning testaments and other things are diligently kept. There nothing is changed, nothing is added or taken away; how much more ought the last will of God be faithfully kept which He promised and gave to Abraham and his seed after him?

> Seven times our blessed Savior spoke,
> When on the cross our sins He took,
> And died lest man should perish:
> Let us His last and dying words
> In our remembrance cherish.

March 16

> Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ. *Gal. iii. 16.*

* * *

Here by a new name he calls the promises of God made unto Abraham, concerning Christ that should bring the blessing upon all nations, a testament. And indeed, the promise is nothing else but a testament. not yet revealed, but sealed up. Now, a testament is not a law, but a donation or free gift. For heirs look not for laws, exactions, or any burdens to be laid upon them by the testament, but they look for the inheritance to be confirmed thereby. There were no laws given to Abraham, says Paul, but a testament was made and delivered unto him; that is to say, the promises were pronounced unto him as touching the spiritual blessing; therefore something was promised and given unto him. If, then, the testament of a man be kept, why should not rather the testament of God be kept? whereof the testament of man is but a sign. Again, if we will keep the signs, why do we not rather keep the things which they signify? Now the promises are made unto him, not in all the Jews or in many seeds, but in one Seed, which is Christ. The Jews will not receive this interpretation of Paul, for they say that the singular number is here put for the plural, one for many. But we gladly receive this meaning and interpretation of Paul, who oftentimes repeats this word "Seed," and expounds this Seed to be Christ; and this he does with an apostolic spirit. Let the Jews deny it as much as they will, we notwithstanding have arguments strong enough, and they cannot deny them.

Ye seed of Israel's chosen race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him, who saves you by His grace,
And crown Him Lord of all!

March 17

> And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. *Gal. iii. 17.*

* * *

Here the Jews might object that God was not only content to give promises to Abraham, but also after four hundred and thirty years He made the Law. God, therefore, mistrusting His own promises as insufficient to justify, added thereto a better thing, that is to say, the Law. The Law, therefore, which followed the promise did abrogate the promise. Paul answers this very well and to the purpose, strongly confuting the same. The Law, says he, was given four hundred and thirty years after the promise was made, and it could not make the promise void and unprofitable, for the promise is the testament of God, confirmed by God Himself, in Christ so many years before the Law. Now, that which God once has promised and confirmed He does not call back again—it remains ratified and sure forever. Why, then, was the Law added? It is the office of the Law to bring men under the curse, and not to bless. Now God wished to have in the world a certain people which might have the Word and testimony of Christ, who, being kept and shut up under the Law, might sigh and groan for their deliverance through the Seed of Abraham, which is Christ. Moreover, the ceremonies commanded in the Law did foreshadow Christ. Wherefore the promise was not abolished, but rather by the Law, as by certain seals, was for a time confirmed, until the letters themselves, or the writing of the testament, to wit, the promise, might be opened, and by the preaching of the Gospel might be spread among all nations.

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

March 18

> For if the inheritance be of the Law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. *Gal. iii. 18.*

* * *

Natural reason, though it be never so blind, is compelled to confess that it is one thing to promise and another thing to require; one thing to give and another to take. The Law requires and exacts of us our works; the promise of the Seed offers unto us the spiritual and everlasting benefits of God, and that freely for Christ's sake. Therefore we obtain the inheritance or blessing through the promise, and not through the Law. He that has the Law has not enough, because he has not the blessing, without which he is compelled to abide under the curse. The Law, therefore, cannot justify, because the blessing is not joined unto it. If the Law could obtain the blessing, why did God then make this promise: "In thy Seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed"? Why did he not rather say: Do this, and thou shalt receive the blessing? It cannot be denied that God, before the Law was, promised unto Abraham the inheritance or blessing, that is to say, remission of sins, righteousness, salvation, and everlasting life, that we might be sons of God and fellow-heirs with Christ. The blessing is given freely without respect to the Law or works. God gave the inheritance before Moses was born or before any man had once thought of the Law. "Why do you vaunt that righteousness comes by the Law, seeing that righteousness, life, and salvation were given to your father Abraham without the Law, yea, before there was any Law?" Paul argues.

> His oath, His covenant, and blood,
> Support me in the sinking flood;
> When every earthly prop gives way,
> He then is all my hope and stay.
> On Christ, the solid rock I stand,
> All other ground is sinking sand.

March 19

> Wherefore then serveth the Law? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made. *Gal. iii. 19a.*

* * *

When we teach that a man is justified without the Law and works, says St. Paul, then this question necessarily arises: If the Law does not justify, why then was it given? Also: Why does God charge and burden us with the Law if it does not justify? Reason cannot answer this question, but is rather offended on account of it. Paul answers thus: Although the Law does not justify, it is very profitable and necessary. It civilly restrains such as are carnal, rebellious, and obstinate. Moreover, it is a glass that shows man himself as he is, a sinner, guilty of death and worthy of God's everlasting wrath and indignation. And to what end does this humbling, bruising, and beating down by this hammer, the Law, serve? To this end, that we may have an entrance unto grace. When the conscience is thus terrified with the Law, then comes the doctrine of the Gospel and grace, which raises up and comforts those who are cast down, saying: Christ came into the world, not to break the bruised reed nor to quench the smoking flax, but to preach the Gospel of glad tidings to the poor, to heal the broken and contrite heart, to preach forgiveness of sins to the captives. The tyranny of the Law, then, must so long continue until that Seed of the blessing come, not to the end that the Law should bring this Seed or give righteousness, but that it should civilly restrain the rebellious and obstinate, spiritually reprove them of sin, humble and terrify them, and when they are thus humbled and beaten down, it should constrain them to look up to that blessed Seed.

> That we Thy holy Law may know
> And mourn our sin and all its woe,
> And yet believe in Father, Son,
> And Holy Spirit, There is One.

March 20

> And it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. *Gal. iii. 19b.*

* * *

This is a little digression on the part of Paul from his purpose, a matter which he only touches by the way, and proceeds. He now speaks of this difference between the Law and the Gospel, that the Law, added to the promises, differed from the Gospel, not only in respect to the time, but also to the author and the efficient cause thereof. For the Law was delivered by the angels, but the Gospel by the Lord Himself. Wherefore the Gospel is far more excellent than the Law. For the Law is the voice of the servants, but the Gospel is the voice of the Lord Himself. Therefore to abase and to diminish the authority of the Law, and to exalt and magnify the Gospel, he says that the Law was a doctrine given to continue but for a small time, for it endured only until the fullness of the promise, that is, till the blessed Seed came which fulfilled the promise; but the Gospel was forever. The Law, therefore, is far inferior to the Gospel because it was ordained by the angels, which are but servants, and endured but for a short time; whereas the Gospel was ordained by the Lord Himself to continue forever. For it was promised before the world began. Moreover, the word of the Law was not only ordained by the angels, being but servants, but also by another servant, far inferior to the angels; namely, by a man, that is to say, Moses. Now, Christ is not a servant, but the Lord Himself, He is not a Mediator between God and man according to the Law, as Moses was, but He is a Mediator of a better testament.

All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all!

March 21

Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. *Gal. iii. 20.*

* * *

Here Paul compares these two mediators together, and that with marvelous brevity. A mediator, says he, is not a mediator for one only. This word necessarily comprehends two, that is to say, him that is offended and him that is the offender; of whom the one has need of intercession and the other needs none. So Moses, by a general definition, is a mediator, because he does the office of a mediator between the Law and the people, which cannot abide the true and spiritual use of the Law. The Law, therefore, must have a new face, and its voice must be changed, that is to say, the voice of the Law must be made spiritual, or the Law must be made lively in the inward affection, and must put on a visor or veil, that it may now become more tolerable, so that the people may be able to hear it by the voice of Moses. Moses is such a mediator as does nothing else but change the voice of the Law and make it tolerable, so that the people may abide the hearing thereof, but he gives no power to accomplish the same. God with His Law is He which is offended, and the offense is such that God cannot pardon it, neither can we satisfy for the same. Therefore between God, who is of Himself but one, and us, there is a terrible discord. Christ, therefore, has set Himself a Mediator between two which are contrary and separate asunder and has reconciled them together. And how has He done this? He has put away the handwriting which was against us, as Paul says in another place, which by the Law was contrary to us, and fastened it to the cross.

Jesus my great High Priest,
Offered His blood and died;
My guilty conscience seeks
No sacrifice beside.
His powerful blood did once atone,
And now it pleads before the throne.

March 22

Is the Law then against the promises of God? God forbid. *Gal. iii. 21a.*

* * *

Paul said before that the Law does not justify. Shall we then take away the Law? No, not so. For it brings with it a certain benefit. It brings men unto a knowledge of themselves, it discovers and increases sin. Here another objection arises: If the Law does nothing else but make men worse, in showing unto them their sin, then it is contrary to the promises of God. For it seems that God is only provoked to anger and offended through the Law, and therefore He does not regard nor perform His promises. To this objection Paul briefly answers: God forbid. Why so? Because God makes no promise unto us because of our worthiness, our merit, our good works, but for His own goodness and mercies' sake in Christ. He said not to Abraham: All nations shall be blessed in thee because thou hast kept the Law. But when he was uncircumcised, had no Law, and was yet an idolator, He said unto him: Go out of thine own land. I will protect thee, etc. In thy Seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed. These are absolute and sure promises which God freely gives unto Abraham, without any condition or respect of works, either going before or coming after. Paul says: God does not slack His promises because of our sins, neither does He hasten the same for our righteousness and merits. He regards neither the one nor the other. His promise does not stand on our worthiness, but only upon His goodness and mercy.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come.

March 23

For if there had been a Law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law. *Gal. iii. 21b.*

* * *

By these words Paul signifies that no law of itself is able to quicken or give life, but only kills. Therefore such works as are done, not only according to the laws and traditions of men, but also according to the very Law of God, do not justify a man before God, but make him a sinner; they do not pacify the wrath of God, but they kindle it; they do not obtain righteousness, but they hinder it; they do not quicken, but they kill and destroy. Paul here teaches plainly that the Law of itself does not justify, but has a clean contrary effect. Now, after Paul has prosecuted his confutations and arguments sufficiently and in good order, he teaches that the Law (if we consider its true and perfect use) is nothing else but as a certain schoolmaster to lead us unto righteousness. For it humbles men, it prepares and makes them apt to receive the righteousness of Christ, by terrifying them, showing them their guilt, bringing them to a knowledge of their sin. After it has done this, the opinion of man's righteousness vanishes away, and Christ with His benefits becomes sweet unto him. Wherefore the Law is not against the promises of God, but rather confirms them. True, it does not accomplish the promise, nor bring righteousness, notwithstanding it humbles us with its exercise and office, and so makes us more thirsty and more apt to receive the benefits of Christ's righteousness.

The Law is good; but since the fall
Its holiness condemns us all;
It dooms us for our sins to die,
And has no power to justify

March 24

> But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. *Gal. iii. 22.*

* * *

Where has the Scripture concluded all under sin? First, in the promises themselves as touching Christ. Wheresoever there is any promise in the Scripture made unto the fathers concerning Christ, there the blessing is promised, that is, righteousness, salvation, and eternal life. Therefore by the contrary it is evident that they which must receive the blessing are subject to the curse, that is to say, sin and eternal death; for else to what end was the blessing promised? Secondly, the Scripture shuts men under sin and under the curse, especially by the Law, because its peculiar office is to reveal sin and increase wrath, as Paul declares: "As many as are of the works of the Law, are under the curse," and Deut. xxvii. 26: "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to do them." For these sentences in plain words shut under sin and under the curse, not only those which sin manifestly against the Law or do not outwardly accomplish the Law, but also those which are under the Law and endeavor to perform the same. Briefly, whatsoever is without Christ and His promise is shut under sin. Paul has said, Scripture concludes all under sin. Forever? No, but until the promise should be given. To whom was the promise to be given? To them that believe. In whom? In Jesus Christ, who is the blessed Seed which redeems all believers from the curse, that they might receive the blessing.

Jesus Christ, our blessed Savior,
Turned away God's wrath forever;
Suffering pains no tongue can tell,
He saved us from the pains of hell.

March 25

But before faith came, we were kept under the Law. *Gal. iii. 23a.*

* * *

Paul proceeds to declare the profit and necessity of the Law. He said before that the Law was added because of transgressions; not that it is the principal purpose of God to make a Law that should bring death and damnation, but the chief end and aim of the Law is to reveal death, so that it may be seen and known how horrible sin is. However, it does not so reveal death as though it tended to no other end but to kill and destroy, but to the end that when men are cast down, terrified, and humbled, they should fear God. This is explained (*Exod. xx. 20*): "And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not." The office of the Law is to kill, and yet so that God may revive and quicken again. The Law is not given only to kill, but because man is proud and dreams that he is wise, righteous, and holy, therefore it is necessary that he should be humbled by the Law, so that his own opinion of righteousness might be slain, for otherwise no man can obtain life. So, although the Law kills, God uses this effect of the Law, this death, to a good end, that is, to bring life. For God, seeing that the whole world was suffering under this plague; namely, man's opinion of his own righteousness, his hypocrisy, and confidence in his own holiness, and knowing that this evil could not be beaten down by any other means, determined to have it slain by the Law. Not for ever, but that, when it was once slain, man might be raised up again above and beyond the Law.

Our ruin God has not intended,
Salvation He would fain bestow;
For this the Son to earth descended,
And then to heaven again did go;
For this so loudly evermore
He knocketh at our heart's closed door.

March 26

Shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. *Gal. iii. 23b.*

* * *

Here Paul speaks of the fullness of the time wherein Christ came. But we must apply it not only to that time, but also to the inward man. For that which is done as history and according to the time wherein Christ came, abolishing the Law and bringing liberty and eternal life to light, is always done spiritually in every Christian. These times, then (of the Law and the Gospel, I mean), are in a Christian as touching the affections and inward man. The time of the Law is when the Law exercises me and torments me with heaviness of heart, oppresses me, brings me to the knowledge of sin, and increases the same. Here the Law is in its true use and perfect work, which a Christian often feels as long as he lives. So Paul was given a prick in the flesh, "the angel of Satan to buffet him." He would gladly have been delivered from all trouble and anguish of spirit, and therefore he desired that this temptation might be taken from him. Notwithstanding, this was not done. This battle every Christian feels. The time of grace is when the heart is raised up again by the promise of the free mercy of God, who says: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." We are reminded that there is beside the Law, grace and faith and blessing. These do not accuse me, terrify me, and condemn me, but they comfort me, they bid me trust in the Lord, and promise unto me victory and salvation in Christ.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

March 27

Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. *Gal. iii. 24.*

* * *

The Law is not a schoolmaster to bring us unto another lawgiver which requires good works, but unto Christ, our Justifier and Savior, that by faith in Him we might be justified, and not by works. But when a man feels the force and strength of the Law, he does not understand nor believe this. Therefore he says, I have lived wickedly, for I have transgressed all the commandments of God, and therefore am guilty of death. If God will prolong my life a number of years, or at least a number of months, I will amend my life and live a holy life hereafter. But this is abuse of the real use of the Law. The true use of the Law is to teach me the knowledge of my sin and humble me, so that I may come to Christ and be justified by faith. But faith is neither Law nor work, but an assured confidence which apprehends Christ, "who is the end of the Law." Not that He has abolished the old Law and given a new, or that He is a judge who must be pacified by works, but He is the end of the Law to every one who believes; that is, every one who believes in Jesus is righteous and the Law may not accuse him. The Law humbles the sinner, accuses him and bruises him, but only to the end that this may drive him to Christ, his Savior and Comforter. When this is done he is no longer under a schoolmaster. Seeing the whole world is overwhelmed with sin, it has need of this ministry of the Law, so that sin may be revealed, and the sinner driven to Christ.

By Thee my prayers acceptance gain,
Although with sin defiled:
Satan accuses me in vain,
And I am owned a child.

March 28

> But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. *Gal. iii. 25.*

* * *

After faith is revealed, we are free from the Law, from the prison, and from our schoolmaster, for when faith is revealed the Law terrifies no more. If you look unto Christ and that which He has done, there is then no Law. For Christ, coming in the time appointed, took away the Law. Now, since the Law is gone, we are not kept under the tyranny of it any more, but we live in joy and safety under Christ, who now reigns in us by His Spirit, and where the Lord reigns there is liberty. If we could perfectly apprehend Christ, who has abolished the Law by His death and has reconciled us to His Father, the schoolmaster (the Law) should have no power over us at all. But the law of the members, rebelling against the Law of the mind, hinders us, so that we cannot perfectly lay hold upon Christ. The lack, however, is not in Christ, but in us, who have not yet put off this flesh, to which sin continually cleaves as long as we live. Wherefore, as touching ourselves, we are partly free from the Law, and partly under the Law. According to the Spirit, we serve, with Paul, the "law of God; but according to the flesh, the law of sin" (*Rom. vii.*). As touching the conscience, we are fully delivered from the Law, and therefore that schoolmaster must not rule in it; he must not afflict it with his terrors, threatenings, and captivity. And although he seeks continually to do so, our conscience must not be moved, for it has Christ crucified before its eyes, who has removed all the demands of the Law out of the conscience.

By our own strength to put aside
God's wrath and win His blessing,
Is useless task by many tried,
Is only guilt increasing:
For God hypocrisy abhors;
Flesh with the Spirit ever wars,
For 'tis by nature evil.

March 29

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. *Gal. iii. 26.*

* * *

Paul as a true and excellent teacher of faith, has always these words in his mouth, "by faith, in faith, of faith," which is in Christ Jesus. He does not say, You are the children of God because you are circumcised, because you have heard the Law and have done the works thereof; but by faith in Jesus Christ. The Law does not make us children of God, much less the traditions of men. The law does not beget in us a new nature, a new birth; but it sets before us the old birth. whereby we were born into the kingdom of the devil, and thus prepares us for a new birth, which is by faith in Christ, and not by the Law. Paul would say: Although you are tormented, killed, and humbled by the Law, yet the Law has not made you righteous or made you the children of God. This is done by faith alone. What faith? Faith in Christ. Faith in Christ makes us the children of God, and not the Law. The same thing is witnessed by John: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (*John i. 12*). What tongue, either of men or of angels, can sufficiently extol and magnify the great mercy of God toward us, that we, which are miserable sinners and by nature the children of wrath, should be called to His grace and glory to be made the children and heirs of God, fellow-heirs with the Son of God, and lords over heaven and earth, and that, only by means of our faith in Christ Jesus!

Salvation unto us has come
By God's free grace and favor,
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never:
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is the Mediator.

March 30

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. *Gal. iii. 27.*

* * *

The words, "to put on Christ," may be understood in two ways: according to the Law, and according to the Gospel. According to the Law, as it is said in Romans xiii.: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," that is, follow the example and virtues of Christ. Do that which He did, and suffer that which He suffered. Now we see in Christ a singular patience, an inestimable mildness of love, and a wonderful modesty in all things. This goodly apparel we must put on, that is to say, follow these virtues. But the putting on of Christ according to the Gospel consists not in imitation, but in a new birth and a new creation; that is to say, in putting on Christ's innocency, His righteousness, His wisdom, His power, His saving health, His life, and His Spirit. We are clothed with the leather coat of Adam, which is a garment of sin, that is to say, we are all subject unto sin, all sold under sin. There is in us horrible blindness, ignorance, contempt, and hatred of God; moreover, evil concupiscence, uncleanliness, covetousness. This garment, that is to say, the corrupt and sinful nature, must be put off that we may be made children of God. This is not done by changing of a garment, or by any laws or works, but by a new birth and by the renewing of the inward man, which is done in Baptism. They which are baptized are regenerated and renewed by the Holy Ghost to a heavenly righteousness and to eternal life. There arises a new light: new and holy affections, the fear of God, faith, and hope. This is to put on Christ truly and according to the Gospel.

So, too, by our repentance, must
The old man, with his sins and lust,
Be daily drowned, and then arise
A new man, righteous, pure, and wise.

March 31

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. *Gal. iii. 28.*

* * *

With these words Paul mightily abolishes the Law. For when a man is renewed by Baptism and has put on Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek. The Apostle speaks not here of the Jew according to his nature and substance, but he calls him a Jew who is a disciple of Moses, is subject to the Law, is circumcised, and with all his endeavor keeps the ceremonies commanded in the Law. Where Christ is put on, says he, there is neither Jew nor circumcision, nor ceremony of the Law any more, for Christ has abolished all the laws of Moses. The conscience, believing in Christ, must be so surely persuaded that the Law is abolished, with all its terrors and threatenings, that it should be utterly ignorant whether there were ever any Moses, any Law, or any Jew. For Christ and Moses can in nowise agree. Moses came with the Law and with many works and with many ceremonies, but Christ came without any Law, without any exacting works, giving grace and righteousness: "For the Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." In the world and according to the flesh, there is great difference and inequality of persons, and the same must be diligently observed. But in Christ there is no Law, no difference of persons; there is neither Jew nor Greek, but all are one. For there is but one body, one spirit, one hope; one Gospel, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, one Christ and Lord of all *(Eph. iv. 4-6)*. We have the same Christ, I and all the faithful, which Peter, Paul, and all the saints had. Therefore my conscience knows nothing of the Law, but sees Christ only.

One Baptism, and one faith have we,
One Spirit sent to win us,
One Lord, one Father, and one God,
Above, and through, and in us.

April 1

> And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. *Gal. iii. 29.*

* * *

Paul tells us here: If you believe and are baptized into Christ, if you believe that Christ is that promised Seed of Abraham which brought the blessing to all the Gentiles, then you are the children of Abraham, not by nature, but by adoption. For the Scripture attributes unto him, not only the children of the flesh, but also of adoption and promise. This is a singular consolation, that the Gentiles are the children of Abraham, and consequently the people of God. The promise, "In thy Seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed," belongs also to the Gentiles. It is true, the promise was made only to the Jews, as shown in Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20: "He showeth His Word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation." Notwithstanding, that which was promised comes to us by faith, the only means by which we apprehend the promise of God. Although the promise was not made to us, yet it is made concerning us and for us, for we are named in the promise. The promise shows plainly that Abraham should be the father, not only of the Jewish nation, but of many nations, and that he should be the heir, not of one kingdom, but of all the world. So the glory of the whole kingdom of Christ is imparted to us. Wherefore all laws are utterly abolished in the heart and conscience of a Christian, although without they remain still in the flesh.

Ye seed of Israel's chosen race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him, who saves you by His grace,
And crown Him Lord of all!

April 2

> Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. *Gal. iv. 1, 2.*

* * *

You see with what vehement affection Paul goes about to call back the Galatians, and what strong arguments he uses in debating the subject, gathering arguments of experience, of the example of Abraham, of the testimonies of the Scripture, so that the whole matter is often repeated. He had, in a manner, finished the disputation concerning justification, concluding that a man is justified before God by faith alone, but he then calls also to remembrance the example of the little heir, trying in every way, with a certain holy subtlety, to take the Galatian's unawares. Paul therefore, after he has brought the similitude of a man's testament, of the prison, and of the schoolmaster, uses also this similitude of an heir to move and to persuade them. And it is a very profitable thing to be furnished with similitudes and examples, which not only Paul, but also the prophets and Christ Himself often used. In this example Paul points out that it is ordained by the civil laws that an heir, although he be the lord of all his father's goods, differs not from a servant. Indeed, he has an assured hope of his inheritance, but before he comes to his years, his tutors hold him in subjection. They do not commit unto him the ordering of his own goods, but constrain him to serve, so that he is kept and maintained with his own goods like a servant. And this subjection and servitude is profitable for him, for otherwise through folly he would soon waste all his goods. But this captivity has a certain time limit appointed by the father.

Lord, grant that we on thee may call
Who canst and wilt give help to all;
That as Thy children we may live,
Whom Thou in Baptism didst receive.

April 3

Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. *Gal. iv. 3.*

* * *

In like manner, when we were little children we were heirs, having the promise of the inheritance to come, which should be given unto us by the Seed of Abraham, that is, Christ, in whom all nations should be blessed. But because the fullness of time was not yet come, Moses, our tutor, governor, and schoolmaster, came, holding us in captivity with our hands bound, so that we could neither hold nor possess our inheritance. In the meantime, notwithstanding, like the heir, we are nourished and maintained in hope of liberty to come, to wit, when Christ should come, who by His coming should put an end to the time of the Law, and begin the time of grace. Indeed, once with His own blood He redeemed and sanctified all, but because we are not yet perfectly pure, therefore daily He comes unto us spiritually, and continually, more and more, accomplishes the appointed time of His Father, abrogating and abolishing the Law. When Paul speaks here of the elements and rudiments of the world, meaning the Law, he uses his own peculiar manner of speech, and speaks of the Law in such a way as to abase its authority, in order to admonish us that in the terrors of sin, wrath, and the judgment of God, we should not trust to our own righteousness, or the righteousness of the Law, but in Christ only, removing the Law utterly out of sight, because it cannot help us.

When I was Satan's easy prey,
And deep in debt and bondage lay,
He paid His life for my discharge—
His loving-kindness, O how large!

April 4

> But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. *Gal. iv. 4, 5.*

* * *

After the fullness of time was come, that is, after the time of the Law was fulfilled, then God sent His Son, etc. Note how diligently Paul defines Christ, comprehending both the person and the office of Christ. His person, he says, consists of His divine and human nature: "God sent His Son, born of a woman." Christ therefore is very God and man. His office he sets forth in these words: "Being made under the Law to redeem them that were under the Law." Christ, when the time of the Law was accomplished, abolished the same, and so brought liberty to those that were oppressed therewith, but made no new Law after or besides that old Law of Moses. Christ came not to abolish the whole Law that He might make a new, but, as Paul here says, He was sent of His Father into the world to redeem those which were kept in thralldom under the law. Christ Himself says *(John xii. 47)*: "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world," that is to say, I came not to bring any Law, nor to judge men according to the same, as Moses and other lawgivers, but I have a higher and better office. The Law killed you, but I deliver you from the tyranny thereof. This same blessing, righteousness, life, deliverance from the Law, etc., as St. Paul before has called it, he now calls the adoption of sons, or the inheritance of everlasting life. By what merit have we received this blessing? By none at all. We have received it by the redemption of Jesus Christ.

> Awake, my soul, to joyful lays,
> And sing thy great Redeemer's praise,
> He justly claims a song from me—
> His loving-kindness, O how free!

April 5

> And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. *Gal. iv. 6.*

* * *

The manifest and visible appearance of the Holy Ghost was necessary in the primitive Church, for it was expedient that it should be established by many miracles, because of the unbelievers, as Paul witnesses: "Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not" *(I Cor. xiv. 22).* But after the Church was gathered together and confirmed with those miracles, it was not necessary that this visible sending of the Holy Ghost should continue any longer. Now the Holy Ghost is sent by the Word into the hearts of the believers, without any visible appearance. By the hearing of the eternal Word, we receive an inward fervency and light, whereby we are changed and become new creatures. This change is no work of reason, or the power of man, but is the gift and operation of the Holy Ghost, which comes with the Word preached, purifies our hearts by faith, and brings forth in us new spiritual motions. But our faith is weak, we are not always fully persuaded that we are under grace. Let every one so practice with himself that his conscience may be fully assured that he is under grace and that his person and his works please God. Let him say to himself: I know that I am accepted, and that I have the Holy Ghost, not for my own worthiness, my work, my merit, but for Christ's sake, in whom I believe. If I err, He is righteous and cannot err. And God has sent His Spirit into my heart, which cries, Abba, Father.

Spirit of holiness,
Let all Thy saints adore
Thy sacred gifts, and join to bless
Thy heart-renewing power.

April 6

Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. *Gal. iv. 7.*

* * *

Paul in this place takes this word "servant" otherwise than he did before in the third chapter, where he says: "There is neither bond nor free." Here he calls him a servant of the Law, who is subject to the Law. To be a servant, according to Paul in this place, is to be guilty and captive under the Law, under the wrath of God and death. This bondage, says Paul, continues no longer, it does not oppress us nor make us heavy any more. If, says Paul, by the Spirit of Christ you cry, Abba, Father, then you are indeed no longer servants, but free men and sons. Therefore you are without Law, without sin, without death. There is no more servitude, but adoption, which brings to us not only liberty from the Law, sin, and death, but also the inheritance of everlasting life, for he that is a son must also be an heir. There is no work or merit that brings to him the inheritance, but birth by faith. In obtaining the inheritance he is a mere patient, and not an agent; that is to say, not to beget, not to labor, not to care, but to be born is that which makes him an heir. So we obtain eternal gifts, namely, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness, the glory of the resurrection, and everlasting life, not as agents, but as patients, that is, not by doing, but by receiving. Nothing here comes between, but faith alone apprehends the promise. By this birth, then, we are made new creatures, formed by faith in the Word; we are made Christians, children and heirs of God through Jesus Christ.

My loving Father Thou dost take me
To be henceforth Thy child and heir;
My faithful Savior, Thou dost make me
The fruit of all Thy sorrows share,
Thou Holy Ghost, wilt comfort me,
When darkest clouds around I see.

April 7

> Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn we again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? *Gal. iv. 8, 9.*

* * *

This is the conclusion of Paul's disputation. In the rest of the epistle he does not reprove much, but gives precepts concerning conduct. Here he would say: You have teachers which would bring you back into the bondage of the Law. This I did not do; but by my doctrine I called you out of darkness into wonderful light and knowledge of God. I brought you out of bondage and set you in the freedom of sons of God, not by preaching unto you the works of the Law, or the merits of men, but the grace and righteousness of God, and the giving of heavenly and eternal blessings through Christ. Now, seeing this is true, why do you suffer yourselves so easily to be brought from grace unto the Law, from freedom to bondage? One might here ask, Why does Paul say that the Galatians turned back again to weak and beggarly rudiments or ceremonies, that is to say, to the Law, whereas they never had the Law, for they were Gentiles (although he wrote these things to the Jews also)? Does Paul take it to be all one thing to fall from the promise of the Law, from faith to works; and to do service unto gods which by nature are no gods? Whosoever is fallen from the article of justification is ignorant of God, and an idolator, for when this article is taken away, there remains nothing else but error, hypocrisy, impiety, and idolatry, how much soever it seems in outward appearance to be the very truth, the true service of God, and true holiness.

It was a false, misleading dream
That God His Law had given
For us to keep and merit claim
And earn our way to heaven:
God's Law is but a mirror bright
To bring the inbred sin to sight
That lurks within our nature.

April 8

Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. *Gal. iv. 10.*

* * * 33386

By these words Paul plainly declares what the false apostles taught, namely, the observation of days, months, times, and years. The Jews were commanded to keep holy the Sabbath-day, the new moons, the first and the seventh month, the appointed times of feasts, etc. These ceremonies the Galatians were constrained by the false apostles to keep as necessary to righteousness. Therefore he says that they, losing the grace and liberty which they had in Christ, were turned back to the serving of weak and beggarly elements. For they were persuaded by the false apostles that these Laws must needs be kept, and, by keeping of them, they should obtain righteousness; but if they did not keep them, they should be damned. Contrariwise, Paul will not suffer that any man's conscience should be bound to the Law of Moses, but always be delivered from the Law. "Behold I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing" *(Gal. v. 2)*. And "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" *(Col. ii. 16, 17)*. So says our Savior Christ: "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation of the Law" *(Luke xvii 20)*. Much less are men's consciences to be burdened and snared with human traditions.

May we Thy precepts, Lord, fulfill,
And do on earth our Father's will,
As angels do above;
Still walk in Christ, the living Way,
With all Thy children, and obey
The law of Christian love.

April 9

I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain. *Gal. iv. 11.*

* * *

Here Paul shows himself to be greatly troubled through the fall of the Galatians; whom he would more bitterly reprove, but that he fears lest, if he should deal with them more sharply, he should not only not make them better, but more offend them, and so utterly alienate their minds from him. Therefore, in writing, he changes and mitigates his words, and says: It grieves me that I have preached the Gospel with so great diligence and faithfulness amongst you, and see no fruit. Notwithstanding, although he shows a very loving and a fatherly affection towards them, yet withal he chides them somewhat sharply, but yet covertly. For when he says that he had labored in vain, that is to say, that he had preached the Gospel among them without any fruit, he shows covertly that either they were obstinate unbelievers, or else were fallen from the doctrine of faith. Now both these, unbelievers as well as backsliders from the doctrine of faith, are sinners, wicked, unrighteous, and damned. Such therefore do obey the Law in vain. And in these words, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain," is contained a secret excommunication, for the apostle means hereby that the Galatians were secluded and separate from Christ, unless they speedily returned to sound and sincere doctrine again; yet he pronounces no open sentence against them.

O haste to help, ere we are lost!
Send preachers forth, in spirit strong,
Armed with Thy Word, a dauntless host,
Bold to attack the rule of wrong;
Let them the earth for Thee reclaim,
Thy heritage, to know Thy name.

April 10

Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. *Gal. iv. 12.*

* * *

Now, the greater part of the Epistle being finished, Paul begins to perceive that he has handled them too sharply. Therefore, being careful lest he should do more hurt than good through his severity, he shows that his sharp chiding proceeded out of a fatherly affection and a true apostolical heart; and so he amplifies the matter with sweet and gentle words, to the end that if he had offended any, as no doubt there were many offended, by these sweet and loving words he might win them again. *Be ye as I am, for I am as ye are.* These words are to be understood, not of doctrine, but of affections. As though he would say, Perhaps I have too sharply chidden you. O my Galatians, take this my chiding with such a mind as I bear towards you; for the matter required that I should show myself so sharp and severe towards you. But is this beseeching the Galatians, when he calls them bewitched, disobedient to the truth, and crucifiers of Christ? It seems rather to be a great rebuke. But contrariwise Paul says that it is no rebuke, but an earnest beseeching, and indeed so it is, if you respect the fatherly heart, which moves him so to speak. You have not offended me, he says, but yourselves; therefore I am thus troubled, not for my own cause, but for the love I bear unto you.

Lord, pour Thy Spirit from on high,
And Thine ordained servants bless;
Graces and gifts to each supply,
And clothe Thy priests with righteousness.

Wisdom, and zeal, and faith impart,
Firmness and meekness from above,
To bear Thy people in their heart,
And love the souls whom Thou dost love.

April 11

> Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. *Gal. iv. 13, 14.*

* * *

Now Paul declares what pleasure he had received of the Galatians. The first benefit, says he, which I esteem as the greatest of all, was this: When I began first to preach the Gospel among you, my cross did not offend you at all, but you showed yourselves so loving, so kind, and so friendly towards me, that not only were you not offended with this my infirmity of the flesh, my temptations and afflictions wherewith I was almost overwhelmed, but you loved me dearly, and received me as an angel of God, yea rather as Christ Jesus Himself. This is indeed a great commendation of the Galatians, that they received the Gospel of a man so contemptible and afflicted on every side as Paul was. For when he preached the Gospel among them, both the Jews and Gentiles murmured and raged against him. For all the mighty, wise, religious, and learned men hated, persecuted, and blasphemed Paul. With all this the Galatians were not offended, but, turning their eyes from the beholding of this infirmity, these temptations and dangers, they did not only hear that poor, despised, wretched, and afflicted Paul, and acknowledged themselves to be his disciples, but they also received and heard him as an angel of God, yea, as Christ Himself. Paul here calls afflictions the infirmities of the flesh, which he suffered, like other Apostles, the Prophets, and all godly men; notwithstanding, he was mighty in spirit. For the power of Christ was in him, which always reigned and triumphed through him.

> Come as a teacher, sent from God,
> Charged his whole counsel to declare;
> Lift o'er our ranks the prophet's rod,
> While we uphold thy hands with prayer.

April 12

> Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. *Gal. iv. 15.*

* * *

As if he would say, How happy you were counted! How much were you then praised and commended! You were not only blessed, but in all things most blessed and highly commended. Thus he goes about to qualify and mitigate his bitter potion, that is to say, his sharp chiding, fearing lest the Galatians should be offended therewith; especially seeing he knew that the false apostles would slander him, and most spitefully interpret his words. Paul therefore, by these mild and sweet words, goes about to prevent the false apostles, to the end they should have no occasion to slander and pervert his words, saying: Paul handles you very ungently, he calls you foolish, bewitched, and disobedient to the truth; which is a sure token that he seeks not your salvation, but accounts you as damned and rejected of Christ. He praises the Galatians above measure. You did not only entreat me, he says, most courteously, and with all reverence receiving me as an angel of God, but also, if necessity had required, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them unto me, yea, you would have bestowed your lives for me. And indeed the Galatians bestowed their lives for him, for in that they received and maintained Paul whom the world accounted most execrable and accursed, they turned upon their own heads, as receivers and maintainers of Paul, the cruel hatred and indignation of all the Jews and Gentiles.

Then let us follow our dear Lord,
Bearing the cross appointed,
And bravely cleaving to His Word,
In suffering be undaunted.
Who has not stood the battle's strain
The crown of life shall ne'er obtain.

April 13

Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? *Gal. iv. 16.*

* * *

Here he shows the reason why he speaks kindly again to the Galatians, for he suspects that they take him for their enemy because he had rebuked them so sharply. I pray, says he, that you set apart these rebukes, and separate them from doctrine; then you shall find that my purpose was not to rebuke you, but to teach you the truth. Indeed, I confess that my epistle is sharp and severe, but by this severity I go about to call you back again to the truth of the Gospel, from which you have fallen, and to keep you in the same; therefore apply this sharpness and this bitter potion, not to your persons, but to your disease, and judge me not to be your enemy in rebuking you so sharply, but rather think that I am your father, for unless I loved you dearly as children, and knew also that I am beloved of you, I would not have reproved you so sharply. It is the part of a friend freely to admonish a friend if he do amiss, and when he is so admonished, if he be wise, he is not angry with the other which has so friendly admonished him and told him the truth, but gives him thanks. Seeing therefore that I have reprehended you out of mere love, in order that you might abide in the truth, you ought not to be offended with me, nor lose the truth, or consider me as your enemy because of my friendly and fatherly reprehension.

Oh, may Thy pastors faithful be,
Not laboring for themselves, but Thee:
Give grace to feed with wholesome food;
The sheep and lambs bought by Thy blood;
To tend Thy flock, and thus to prove
How dearly they the Shepherd love!

April 14

They zealously affect you, but not well: yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. *Gal. iv. 17.*

* * *

Here he reproves the flattery of the false apostles. For Satan is wont, by his ministers, through wonderful subtilty and crafty sleights, to beguile the simple, as Paul says: "By good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" *(Rom. xvi. 18)*. First of all they make great protestations that they seek nothing else but the advancement of God's glory, and moreover that they are moved by the Spirit, because the truth is not purely taught by others, to teach the infallible truth, that by this means the elect may be delivered from error, and may come to the true light and knowledge of the truth. Being thus deceived, the Galatians might say to Paul, Why do you inveigh so bitterly against our teachers because they are jealous over us, since that which they do they do out of zeal and mere love? This ought not to offend you. Indeed, Paul says, they are jealous over you, but their jealousy is not good. I am as zealous over you, says Paul, as they. But now judge which zeal is better, mine or theirs; which is good and godly, which is evil and carnal. They are very jealous over you, but by this means they seek that you again should be zealous toward them, and reject me. If their zeal were sincere and godly, then surely they would be content that I should be beloved of you as well as they. But they hate our doctrine, and therefore their desire is that it may be utterly abolished, and their own preached among you. In order to bring this to pass, they go about by this jealousy to pluck your hearts from me, and make me odious unto you. Thus he brings the false apostles into suspicion among the Galatians, showing that by this godly pretence they go about to deceive them.

Fill with the radiance of Thy grace
The souls now lost in error's maze,
And all whom in their secret minds
Some dark delusion haunts and blinds.

April 15

> But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. *Gal. iv. 18.*

* * *

Paul would here say, I commend you for this, that you loved me so entirely when I preached the Gospel amongst you in the infirmity of the flesh. You ought to bear the same affection towards me now when I am absent in the body, even as if I had never departed from you. For though I be absent in the body, you have my doctrine, which you ought to retain and maintain, seeing you received the Holy Ghost through it. I do not therefore reprehend your zeal, but I praise it, and so far I praise it as it is the zeal of God, or of the Spirit, and not of the flesh. Now, the zeal of the Spirit is always good, for it is an earnest affection and motion of the heart to a good thing, and so is not the zeal of the flesh. He commends the zeal of the Galatians that thereby he may pacify their minds, and that they may patiently suffer their correction. As if he would say, Take my correction in good part, for it proceeds of no displeasure, but of a sorrowful heart and careful for your salvation. This is a lively example to teach all ministers how to be careful for their sheep, and to assay every way, that, by chiding, fair speaking, or entreating, they may keep them in sound doctrine, and turn them from subtile seducers and false teachers.

Fight the good fight
With all thy might;
Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right:
Lay hold on life and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally

April 16

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. *Gal. iv. 19.*

* * *

All Paul's words are weighty and fitly framed to the purpose, that they may move the hearts of the Galatians and win their favor again. And these are sweet and loving words when he calls them children. When he says: "Of whom I travail in birth," it is an allegory, for the Apostles are in the stead of the parents, as schoolmasters also are in their place and calling; for as parents beget the bodily form, so they beget the form of the mind. Now, the form of a Christian mind is faith, or the confidence of the heart that lays hold of Christ, and cleaves to Him alone, and to nothing else. The heart which is furnished with this confidence or assurance, to wit, that for Christ's sake we are righteous, has the true form of Christ. Now, this form is given by the ministry of the Word, as it is said: "I have begotten you through the Gospel" *(I Cor. iv. 15)*. Moreover, by these words, "of whom I travail in birth," he touches the false apostles; as though he would say, I begot you rightly through the Gospel, but these corrupters have formed a new shape in your heart, not of Christ but of Moses; so that now your affiance is not grounded any more upon Christ, but upon the works of the Law. To be brief, he says: I travail of you, that is to say, I labor carefully to call you back to your former faith, which you have lost, being deceived by the craft and subtilty of the false apostles, and are returned to the Law and works. Therefore I must now again carefully travail to bring you back from the Law to the faith of Christ.

Guard the helpless; seek the strayed;
Comfort troubles, banish grief;
In the might of God arrayed,
Scatter sin and unbelief.

April 17

I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you. *Gal. iv. 20.*

* * *

It is a common saying that a letter is a dead messenger, for it can give no more than it has. And no epistle or letter is written so exactly that there is nothing lacking. For the circumstances are diverse: there is a diversity of times, places, persons, manners, and affections, all of which no epistle can express; therefore it moves the reader diversely, making him now sad, now merry, as he himself is disposed. But if anything be spoken sharply or out of time, the lively voice of a man may expand, mitigate, or correct the same. Therefore the Apostle wishes that he were with them, so that he might temper and change his voice, if he should see it needful by the qualities of their affection. If he should see any of them very much troubled, he might so temper his words that they should not be oppressed thereby with more heaviness: contrariwise, if he should see others highminded, he might sharply reprehend them, lest they should be too secure and careless, and so at length become contemners of God. Paul says, I am so troubled in spirit, that I do not know how by letters to behave myself toward you. In his letter we have a lively description of the true affection of an Apostle. He omits nothing; he chides the Galatians, he entreats them, he speaks them fair, he highly commends their faith, laboring by all means to bring them back again to the truth of the Gospel and to deliver them out of the snares of the false apostles.

Anoint them prophets! Make their ears attent
To Thy divinest speech; their hearts awake
To human need; their lips make eloquent
To assure the right, and every evil break

April 18

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the Law, do ye not hear the Law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. *Gal. iv. 21–23.*

* * *

Being in great perplexity and very concerned about this matter, Paul adds by the way this allegory which then comes to his mind of Abraham and his two sons. You forsake grace, faith, and Christ, he says to the Galatians, and turn back again to the Law; you want to be under the Law, and become wise through it. Therefore I will talk to you of the Law. Abraham had two sons, Ishmael by Agar, and Isaac by Sarah. They were both the true sons of Abraham. But here is the difference. Ishmael, which was born of the bondwoman, was born after the flesh, that is to say, without the promise and the Word of God. But Isaac was not only born of the freewoman, but also according to the promise. Agar conceived and brought forth Ishmael, but there was no Word of God that foreshadowed that this should come to pass, and no word of God which commanded Abraham so to do. But Isaac was expressly named *(Gen. xvii. 7):* "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac." Abraham has two sorts of children. Some are born of his flesh and blood, but the Word and promise of God goes before. Others are born without the promise, as Ishmael. Therefore the children of the flesh are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are God's children. Paul wishes to stop the mouths of the proud Jews, which gloried that they were the seed and children of Abraham.

God would not have the sinner die,
His Son with saving grace is nigh,
His Spirit in the Word doth teach
How man the blessed goal may reach.

April 19

Which things are an allegory: for these are two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. *Gal. iv. 24.*

* * *

Abraham is a figure of God, who has two sons, that is to say, two sorts of people who are represented by Ishmael and Isaac. These two are born unto Him by Agar and Sarah, which signify the two Testaments, the Old and the New. The Old is Mt. Sinai, begetting unto bondage, which is Agar. Likewise then as Agar, the bondmaid, brought forth to Abraham a son, and yet not an heir, but a servant, so Sinai, the allegorical Agar, brought forth to God a son, that is to say, a carnal people. Now Ishmael was born of a bondmaid after the flesh, that is to say, without the promise, and could not therefore be the heir. So the mystical Agar, that is to say, Mt. Sinai, where the Law was given and the Old Testament ordained, brought forth to God, the great Abraham, a people, but without the promise, for the promise as touching Christ, the Giver of all blessing, and as touching the deliverance from the curse of the Law, from sin and death, also as touching the free remission of sins, of righteousness, and everlasting life, are not added to the Law, but the Law says: "Ye shall therefore keep My statutes, and My judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them" *(Lev. xviii. 5)*. Therefore the promises of the Law are conditional, promising life, not freely, but to such as fulfill the Law, which no man can fulfill. Wherefore, O ye Galatians, Paul says, if you forsake the promise and faith, and fall back to the Law and works, you shall always continue to be servants, you shall always abide under the curse of the Law.

What God doth in His Law demand
No man to Him can render,
And so He draws His flaming brand
To punish the offender:
Our flesh has not those pure desires
Which first of all the Law requires,
So we're in condemnation.

April 20

> For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. *Gal. iv. 25.*

* * *

This is a wonderful allegory. As Paul a little before made Agar of Sinai, so now of Jerusalem he would gladly make Sarah, but he dared not, neither can he do so. He is compelled to join Jerusalem with Mount Sinai, for he says: "This Agar is Mt. Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." He says, then, that this Jerusalem which now is, that is to say, this earthly and temporal Jerusalem, is not Sarah but pertains to Agar, for there Agar reigns. For in it is the Law begetting into bondage; in it are the worship and the ceremonies, the temple, the kingdom, the priesthood; and whatsoever was ordained in Sinai by the mother, which is the Law, the same is done in Jerusalem. Therefore I join her with Sinai, and I comprehend both in one word, to wit, Sinai or Agar. But to the end that the Law should be quite abolished, that whole kingdom which was established in Agar, the earthly Jerusalem, was horribly destroyed with all her ornaments, the temple, the ceremonies, etc. Now, although the New Testament began in it, and so was spread through the whole world, yet notwithstanding, it appertaineth to Agar; that is to say, it is the city of the Law, of the ceremonies, and of the priesthood instituted by Moses. Briefly, it is engendered of Agar, the bondwoman, and therefore is in bondage with her children; that is, it walks in the works of the Law and never attains to the liberty of the Spirit.

God these commandments gave, therein
To show thee, child of man, thy sin,
And make thee also well perceive,
How man unto God should live.
Have mercy, Lord!

April 21

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. *Gal. iv. 26.*

* * *

Jerusalem which is above, that is to say, the spiritual Jerusalem, is Sarah (although Paul does not add the name Sarah, but gives her another name, calling her the freewoman), which is the mother of us all, gendering us unto liberty, and not under bondage as Agar does. Now this heavenly Jerusalem which is above is the Church, that is to say, the faithful dispersed throughout the whole world, which have one and the same Gospel, and the same Sacraments. The word "above" is not spoken of the triumphant Church in heaven, but of the militant Church on earth. For the godly are said to have their conversation in heaven *(Phil. iii.)*, not locally, but in that a Christian believes and lays hold of those inestimable, those heavenly, and eternal gifts—thus he is in heaven. The heavenly blessing is to be delivered from the Law, sin, and death, to be justified and quickened to life, to have peace with God, to have a faithful heart, a joyful conscience, and a spiritual consolation, to have the gift of the Holy Ghost, and to rejoice in God. The new and heavenly Jerusalem, which is a queen and a freewoman, is appointed of God in earth and not in heaven, to be a mother of us all, of whom we have been gendered, and yet daily are gendered. Therefore it is necessary that our mother should be on earth among men, as also her generation is. Notwithstanding, she genders by the Holy Ghost, by the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, and not in the flesh.

One family we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath;
Though now divided by the stream—
The narrow stream of death.

April 22

> For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. *Gal. iv. 27.*

* * *

The Apostle shows by this allegory of the Prophet Isaiah the difference which is between Agar and Sarah, that is to say, between the synagogue and the Church, or between the Law and the Gospel; the Law being the husband of the fruitful woman, that is to say, of the synagogue, begetting very many children. For men of all ages, not only idiots, but also the wisest and best, all mankind except the children of the freewoman, do neither see nor know any other righteousness than the righteousness of the Law. Contrariwise, Sarah, the freewoman, that is to say, the Church, seems to be barren. For the Gospel, which is the Word of the cross and affliction, which the Church preaches, shines not so brightly as the doctrine of the Law and works, and therefore she has not so many disciples to cleave unto her. Moreover, she bears this title, that she forbids good works, makes men secure, and is the cause of all mischief; and therefore she seems to bring no success or prosperity, but all things seem to be full of barrenness, desolation, and desperation. But although she seems to be never so barren without the Law and without works, yet by the Word and Spirit of Christ which is given by the Gospel, through which she conceives, she brings forth and nourishes an infinite number of children.

Let your drooping hearts be glad;
March in heavenly armor clad;
Fight, nor think the battle long;
Victory soon shall tune your song.

April 23

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. *Gal. iv. 28.*

* * *

Paul tells us here that we are not children of the flesh, as Ishmael, or as all the fleshly Israel, that gloried that they were the seed of Abraham and the people of God, whom Christ answered: "But now ye seek to kill Me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham" (*John viii.40*). Also: "If God were your Father, ye would love Me: for I proceeded forth and came from God" (*John viii.42*). As if he would say: Brethren born and brought up together in one house know one another's voice, but "Ye are of your father the devil" (*John viii.44*). We are not such children, says Paul, as they are, which remain servants, and at length shall be cast out of the house. But we are children of the promise, as Isaac was; that is to say, of grace and of faith born only of the promise. Therefore we are pronounced righteous; not by the Law, by works, or our own righteousness, but by the mere mercy and grace of God. Paul repeats very often, and diligently sets forth the promise which is received by faith alone; for he knew that it was very necessary so to do. So much Paul says concerning the allegory out of Genesis, to which he annexes the passage from Isaiah as an interpretation. Now he goes on to apply the history of Ishmael and Isaac for our example and consolation.

Blessed are the sons of God,
They are bought with Christ's own blood;
They are ransomed from the grave,
Life eternal they shall have;
With them numbered may we be,
Here and in eternity.

April 24

> But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit even so it is now. *Gal. iv. 29.*

* * *

This place contains a singular consolation. Whosoever are born and live in Christ, and rejoice in this birth and inheritance of God, have Ishmael for their enemy and their persecutor. For this reason we ought diligently to learn the article of justification, for that only is able to support us against these infinite slanders and offenses, and to comfort us in all our temptations and persecutions. We see that it cannot be otherwise but that the world will be offended with the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and continually cry out that no good cometh of it. For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him" *(I Cor. ii. 14)*. He only beholds the outward evils, troubles, rebellions, murders, sects, and other suchlike things. With these sights he is offended and blinded, and finally falls into the contempt and blaspheming of God and His Word. On the contrary, we ought to stay and comfort ourselves in this, that our adversaries do not accuse and condemn us for any manifest wickedness which we have committed, but for our doctrine, that Christ the Son of God, by the death of the cross, has redeemed us from our sins and from everlasting death. Therefore they do not impugn our life, but our doctrine; yea, the doctrine of Christ and not ours. Therefore if there be any offense, it is Christ's offense and not ours. Now whether they will condemn Christ, and pluck Him out of heaven as a heretic and seditious person for this, that He is our only Justifier and Savior, let them look to that.

> Are there no foes for me to face?
> Must I not stem the flood?
> Is this vile world a friend to grace,
> To help me on to God?

April 25

> Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. *Gal. iv. 30.*

* * *

The Ishmaelites hear in this place the sentence pronounced against them, which overthrows the Jews, Grecians, Romans, and all others which persecute the Church of Christ, and also those who put their trust in their own works, and judge us which rest upon the promise of God, not only to be barren and forsaken, but also heretics cast out of the Church, and that it is impossible that we should be sons and heirs. But God overthrows their judgment, and pronounces this sentence against them, that because they are the children of the bondwoman, and persecute the children of the freewoman, therefore they shall be cast out of the home, and shall have no inheritance with the children of promise, to whom only the inheritance belongs, because they are the children of the freewoman. This sentence is ratified and can never be revoked. For the Scriptures have foretold that the children of the bondwoman shall be cast out of the house, that is to say, out of the kingdom of grace, for they cannot be heirs together with the children of the freewoman. Here is to be noted that the Holy Ghost calls the people of the Law and works, as it were in contempt, the children of the bondwoman, bondservants of the Law, and consequently of sin, of death, and of everlasting damnation. Such sentences diligently considered make us certain of our doctrine, and confirm us in the righteousness of faith, against the doctrine and righteousness of works, which the world embraces and magnifies, condemning and despising the other.

> The saints on earth and those above
> But one communion make;
> Joined to their Lord, in bonds of love,
> All of His grace partake.

April 26

So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. *Gal. iv. 31.*

* * *

Paul here concludes the allegory of the barren church, and of the fruitful people of the Law. We are not, says he, the children of the bondwoman; that is to say, we are not under the Law which begets unto bondage, terrifies, accuses, and brings to desperation: but we are delivered from it by Christ; therefore it cannot terrify nor condemn us. Moreover, although the sons of the bondwoman do persecute us never so much for a time, yet this is our comfort, that they shall be compelled to leave the inheritance unto us, which belongs unto us, who are the sons of the freewoman, and they shall at length be cast into utter darkness. Paul by these words, bondwoman and freewoman, took occasion to reject the righteousness of the Law and to confirm the doctrine of justification. And he purposely takes hold of this word, freewoman, vehemently urging and amplifying the same, especially in the beginning of the next chapter, whereupon he takes occasion to reason of Christian liberty, the knowledge whereof is very necessary. That liberty, which is purchased by Christ, is unto us a most strong fort, whereby we defend ourselves against the tyranny of our enemies. Wherefore we must diligently consider this doctrine of Christian liberty, as well to confirm the doctrine of justification, as also to raise up and comfort weak consciences against so many troubles and offenses, which our adversaries do impute unto the Gospel.

The darkness of my former state,
The bondage, all was mine;
The light of life in which I walk,
The liberty, is Thine.

April 27

> Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. *Gal. v. 1.*

* * *

Paul means to say: Be steadfast; be not careless, but immovable and constant. Lie not down and sleep, but stand up. As if he would say, It is necessary that you be watchful and constant, holding fast that liberty wherein Christ has made you free. For Satan hates the light of the Gospel, that is to say, the doctrine of grace, liberty, consolation, and life, and when he sees it appear, he fights against it with might and main, seeking to overthrow it. Wherefore Paul warns the faithful not to sleep, but constantly and valiantly to resist Satan, that he may not rob them of that liberty which Christ has purchased for them. This is that liberty whereby Christ has made us free, not from an earthly bondage, but from God's everlasting wrath. And this is done in the conscience. There rests our liberty and goes no farther. We are now free, in that our conscience is now free and quiet, not fearing the wrath of God to come. This is that true and inestimable liberty, to the excellency and majesty whereof no other can be compared. Following this liberty there is also another, whereby through Christ we are made free from the Law, sin, death, the power of the devil, etc. For as the wrath of God cannot terrify us, so the Law, sin, and death cannot accuse and condemn us, they cannot drive us to desperation, for faith, which overcomes the world, has made us free and delivered us from them all. The pernicious opinion, that the Law justifies and makes men righteous before God, is deeply rooted in man's reason; therefore Paul uses vehement language, persuading the Galatians that they should not suffer this intolerable burden to be laid upon their shoulders, or be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

Stand then in His great might,
With all His strength endued;
But take, to arm you for the fight,
The panoply of God.

April 28

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. *Gal. v. 2.*

* * *

Paul here, wonderfully stirred up with zeal and fervency of spirit and moved by the Holy Ghost, thunders against the Law and circumcision. Paul, who knows that he has not received the Gospel by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ, and has commission and authority from above to publish and preach the same, tells the Galatians that if they be circumcised Christ shall profit them nothing at all, for they, being deceived by the subtilty of the false apostles, believed that besides faith in Christ it was needful for the faithful to be circumcised or they could not obtain salvation. This place is a sort of touchstone, whereby we may most certainly and freely judge of all doctrines, works, religions, and ceremonies of all men. Whoever teaches that there is anything necessary to salvation besides faith in Christ, they hear in this place the sentence of the Holy Ghost speaking through St. Paul pronounced against them. And if Paul dare give this sentence against the Law and circumcision, which were ordained of God Himself, how much more does he denounce the chaff and the dross of men's traditions. Therefore whoever receives circumcision, with the opinion that it is necessary to justification, to him Christ avails nothing. Of course, Paul does not speak here of the work of circumcision (which does not hurt him who does not regard it as justifying or connect it with righteousness), but of the use of the work, that is, the confidence and righteousness which they annex to this work.

Jesus, the Lord, the mighty God,
An all-sufficient ransom paid:
O matchless price! His precious blood
For vile, rebellious traitors shed.

April 29

For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole Law. *Gal. v. 3.*

* * *

The first injury borne is indeed very great, where Paul says that Christ profits them nothing who are circumcised; and this also, where he says that they who are circumcised are bound to keep the whole Law. These words may be expounded in two ways, negatively and affirmatively. Negatively in this way: Paul testifies that every man which is circumcised performs no piece of the Law; yea, that in the very work of circumcision he is not circumcised, and even in the fulfilling of the Law, he does not fulfill it but transgresses it. This is Paul's simple and plain meaning. In the sixth chapter he expounds himself thus: "They themselves which are circumcised, keep not the Law." So also in the first chapter: "Whosoever are of the works of the Law, are under the curse." As if he said: "Although you are circumcised, yet you are not righteous and free from the Law; and the more you go about to satisfy the Law, and to be set free from it, the more you entangle and snare yourselves in the yoke thereof, so that it has more power to accuse and condemn you. The affirmative exposition is this: He that is circumcised is also bound to keep the whole Law. For he that receives Moses in one point, must of necessity receive him in all. And it helps nothing to say that circumcision is necessary, and not the rest of Moses' Laws. For by the same reason that you are bound to keep circumcision, you are also bound to keep all the Jewish ceremonies and Laws touching meats, places, and times; and Christ must be looked for as yet to come.

I know that sin and guilt combine
To reign o'er every thought of mine,
And turn from good to ill;
I know that when I try to be
Upright, and just, and true to Thee,
I am a sinner still!

April 30

Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace. *Gal. v. 4.*

* * *

Here Paul shows that he speaks not simply of the Law, nor of the works of circumcision, but of the confidence and opinion, that men have to be justified thereby. As if he would say: I do not utterly condemn the Law or circumcision—it is lawful for me to keep company with the Jews, according to the Law, and it is lawful for me to circumcise Timothy—but to seek to be justified by the Law, as if Christ were not yet come, or being present, He alone were not able to justify, that is what I condemn; for so to believe is to be separated from Christ. To seek righteousness by the Law is nothing else but to be separated from Christ, and to make Him unprofitable. Wherefore it is impossible that Christ and the Law should dwell together in one heart. If you think that this is possible, then be sure that Christ is not dwelling in your heart but the devil in the likeness of Christ, accusing and terrifying you, and exacting of you the Law and the works of the Law. For the true Christ does not call you to a reckoning for your sins, nor does He bid you to trust in your own works. And the true knowledge of Christ, or faith, does not dispute whether you have done good works to righteousness or evil works to condemnation, but simply concludes thus: If I have done good works, I am not therefore justified; or, if I have done evil works, I am not therefore condemned. In the matter of justification we must seek how we may hold Christ, for it is Christ alone who justifies, both against evil deeds, and without any good deeds.

'Tis not by works of righteousness
Which our own hands have done,
But we are saved by sovereign grace
Abounding through His Son.

May 1

For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. *Gal. v. 5.*

* * *

Paul here knits up the matter with a notable conclusion, saying: You wish to be justified by the Law, by circumcision, and by works; but we do not seek to be justified by this means, lest Christ should be made utterly unprofitable unto us, and we become debtors to perform the whole Law, and so finally fall away from grace; but we wait in spirit through faith for the hope of righteousness. Here he does not only say, as he is wont, We are justified by faith, but he adds, We wait for the hope of righteousness. Hope, after the manner of Scripture, is taken in two ways: for the thing that is hoped for, and for the affection of him who hopes. So hope in this place may also be taken in two ways. First, the thing that is hoped for, the righteousness for which we hope, which shall certainly be revealed in such time as it pleases the Lord to give it. Secondly, the affection in us that hopes for this righteousness. Our righteousness is not yet revealed, but hangs in hope. For as long as we live here, sin remains in our flesh; there is also a law in our flesh and members, rebelling against the law of the mind, and leading us captive into the services of sin. Now when the affections of the flesh do rage and reign, and we on the other side do through the Spirit wrestle against the same, then is there a place for *hope*. We hope for perfect righteousness, but we are not yet perfectly righteous. It remains then that we be perfectly righteous, and this is it *for which we hope*.

When I shall launch to worlds unseen,
O may I then be found in Him,
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

May 2

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. *Gal. v. 6.*

* * *

"Faith which worketh by love"; that is, faith which is not feigned or hypocritical, but true and lively, which exercises and requires good works through love. Paul would here say: He that would be a true Christian indeed, or one of Christ's kingdom, must be a true believer. Now, he does not truly believe, if works of charity do not follow his faith. Thus on both hands, as well on the right hand as on the left, he shuts out hypocrites from Christ's kingdom. On the left hand he shuts out the Jews, and all such as will work their own salvation, saying: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; that is to say, no works, no service, no worshipings, no kind of life in the world, but faith without any trust in works or merits, avails before God. On the right hand he shuts out all slothful and idle persons, which say, If faith justifies without works, then let us work nothing, but let us only believe, and do what we list. Not so, says Paul. Although it is true that only faith justifies, yet he speaks here of faith in another respect; that is to say, after it has justified, it is not idle, but occupied and exercised in working through love. The true Christian life, he points out, consists inwardly in faith towards God, and outwardly in charity and good works toward our neighbor.

May Thy rich grace impart
Strength to my fainting heart,
My zeal inspire;
As Thou hast died for me,
O may my love to Thee
Pure, warm, and changeless be
A living fire.

May 3

Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth? *Gal. v. 7.*

* * *

Here Paul uses a new figure of speech, in calling the Christian life a course or race. For among the Hebrews to run or to walk signifies as much as to live or to be active. The teachers then run when they teach purely, and the hearers or learners run when they receive the Word with joy, and when the fruits of the Spirit follow. That which seems unto us to be very slow and scarcely to creep, runs swiftly in God's sight. Again, that which is to us nothing else but sorrow, mourning, and death, is before God, joy, mirth, and true happiness. Therefore Christ says: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted (*Matt. v. 4*). "Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh" (*Luke vi. 21*). Paul says they are hindered in this course who fall away from faith and grace to the Law and works, as it happened to the Galatians, being misled by the false apostles. These false apostles brought the Galatians, which ran well at the beginning, to believe that they erred and went very slowly forward when Paul was their teacher, and so bewitched them with their false persuasion, that afterwards, when they had been seduced and fallen clean away from the truth, they thought themselves to be in a happy state and that they ran very well. So that Paul is wont to say that falling in doctrine comes not of man, but of the devil, and is perilous. For they that continue in error are so far from acknowledging their sin, that they maintain the same to be high righteousness.

Run the straight race
Through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes, and seek His face;
Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize.

May 4

This persuasion cometh not of Him that calleth you. *Gal. v. 8.*

* * *

This is a great consolation and singular doctrine, whereby Paul shows how the false persuasion of such as are deceived by wicked teachers may be rooted out of their hearts. The false apostles were jolly fellows, and in outward appearance far surpassing Paul, both in learning and godliness. The Galatians, being deceived with this goodly show, supposed that when they heard them, they heard Christ Himself, and therefore they judged their persuasion to be of Christ. Contrariwise, Paul shows that this persuasion and doctrine was not of Christ, who had called them in grace, but of the devil; and by this means he won many of them from this false persuasion. Again, this consolation pertains to all those that are afflicted, which, through temptation, conceive a false opinion of Christ. For the devil is a marvelous persuader, and knows how to amplify the least sin, yea, a very trifle, in such a way, that he which is tempted shall think it to be a most heinous and horrible crime, and worthy of eternal damnation. Here the troubled conscience must be comforted and raised up, in such a way as Paul raised up the Galatians; namely, that this persuasion comes not of Christ, forasmuch as it fights against the Word of the Gospel, which paints out Christ not as an accuser, a cruel exactor, but as a meek, humble-hearted, and a merciful Savior and a Comforter. We must learn, therefore, how we may withstand this Satan, who transforms himself into the likeness of an angel.

On Christ, by faith, I fain would live,
From Him my life, my all receive;
To Him devote my fleeting hours,
Serve Him alone with all my powers.

May 5

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. *Gal. v. 9.*

* * *

This whole Epistle sufficiently witnesses how Paul was grieved with the fall of the Galatians, and how often he chided and sometimes entreated them, showing the great and horrible enormities that should ensue upon this their fall, unless they repented. This fatherly and apostolical care and admonition of Paul moved some of them nothing at all: many of them acknowledged Paul no more for their teacher, but preferred the false apostles far above him, of whom they thought themselves to have received the true doctrine, and not of Paul. Some others, which had not yet utterly forsaken his doctrine, thought there was no danger in dissenting a little from him in the doctrine of justification and faith. Wherefore, when they heard that Paul made so heinous a matter of that which seemed unto them to be but light and of small importance, they thought among themselves: If we have swerved somewhat from the doctrine of Paul, and there has been some fault in us, yet that is but a small matter, and he ought to let it pass by, or at least not so vehemently denounce it, lest he give occasion to break the concord of the churches. But Paul answers them: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." In philosophy, a small fault in the beginning, is a great and foul fault in the end. So in divinity, one little error overthrows the whole doctrine. Wherefore we must separate life and doctrine far asunder. The doctrine is not ours, but God's. Therefore, we cannot drop or change a single tittle of it.

By grace! may sin and Satan hearken!
I bear my flag of faith in hand,
And pass—for doubts my joy can't darken—
The Red Sea to the Promised Land.
I cling to what my Savior taught.
And trust it whether felt or not.

May 6

I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. *Gal. v. 10.*

* * *

As if he would say, I have taught, admonished, and reproved you enough so that you would hearken unto me: notwithstanding, I hope well of you in the Lord. Here arises a question, whether Paul does well when he says he has a good hope or trust in the Galatians, seeing the Holy Scripture forbids any trust to be put in men. Both faith and charity have their trust and belief, but after diverse sorts, by reason of the diversity of their objects. Faith trusts in God, and therefore it cannot be deceived; charity believes men, and therefore is often deceived. Now this faith that springs of charity is necessary to this present life, for if one man should not believe and trust another, what life should we live upon earth? The true Christians do sooner believe and give credit through charity, than the children of this world do. For faith towards men is a fruit of the Spirit, or of Christian Faith in the godly. Hereupon Paul had a trust in the Galatians, yea, though they were fallen from his doctrine: but yet in the Lord. That is, so far as the Lord was in them and they in the Lord; in other words, so far as they abode in the truth. From which, if they fell away, seduced by the ministers of Satan, he would not trust them any more. Paul has a good hope that they will not receive any other doctrine which shall be contrary to his. But those that were troubling the Galatians should bear their condemnation, no matter how great they were, for one little point of doctrine is of more value than heaven and earth.

Courage then, for all things must
Work for good, and bless us,
If we but in prayerful trust
To His Son address us.

May 7

And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offense of the cross ceased. *Gal. v. 11.*

* * *

Paul labors by all means possible to call the Galatians back again, and now reasons by his own example. I have procured to myself, says he, the hatred and persecution of the priests and elders, and of my whole nation, because I take away righteousness from circumcision; which, if I would attribute unto it, the Jews would not only cease to persecute me, but also would love and highly commend me. But now, because I preach the Gospel of Christ, and the righteousness of faith, abolishing the law and circumcision, therefore I suffer persecution. Contrariwise, the false apostles, to avoid the cross and this deadly hatred of the Jewish nation, do preach circumcision; and by this means they obtain and retain the favor of the Jews. Moreover, they would gladly bring to pass that there should be no dissension, but peace and concord, between the Gentiles and the Jews. But that is impossible to be done without the loss of the doctrine of faith, which is the doctrine of the cross, and full of offenses. Paul says: "Christ sent me to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." As if he said, I would not that the offense and cross of Christ should be abolished. Here some may say: The Christians then are madmen to cast themselves into danger of their own accord, and procure unto themselves the hatred and enmity of the whole world. But this does not offend or trouble Paul, but makes him more bold, and causes him to hope well of the happy success and increase of the Church, for it could not be otherwise than that Christ should reign in the midst of all His enemies.

If thou but suffer God to guide thee,
And hope in Him through all His ways,
He'll give thee strength, what'er betide thee,
And bear thee through the evil days;
Who trusts in God's unchanging love
Builds on the rock that naught can move.

May 8

I would they were even cut off which trouble you. *Gal. v. 12.*

* * *

Is this the part of an Apostle, not only to denounce the false apostles to be troublers of the church, to condemn them, and to deliver them to Satan, but also to wish that they might be utterly rooted out and perish? And what is this else but plain cursing? Paul, no doubt, alludes to circumcision. As if he would say, They compel you to cut off the foreskin of your flesh; but I would that they themselves might be utterly cut off by the root. Here arises a question whether it is lawful for Christians to curse. Why not? However, not always, not for every cause; but when the matter is come to this point, that God's Word must be evil spoken of, and His doctrine blasphemed, and so consequently God Himself, then must we turn this sentence and say: Blessed be God and His Word, and whatsoever is without God, accursed be it. Here it appears how great a matter Paul made of a little leaven, which for the same dares to curse the false apostles, who in outward appearance were men of great authority and holiness. Let us not therefore make little account of the leaven of doctrine; although it be never so little, yet if it be neglected, it will be the cause that little by little the truth and our salvation shall be lost, and God Himself denied. For when the Word is corrupted and God denied and blasphemed (which must needs follow if the Word be corrupted), there remains no hope of salvation. Wherefore let us learn to advance and extol the majesty and authority of God's Word. Wherefore, in this respect, we have no regard of Christian charity or concord, but we sit, as it were, on the judgment-seat, that is to say, we curse and condemn all men which in the least point do deface or corrupt the majesty of God's Word.

Those haughty spirits, Lord, restrain,
Who o'er Thy Church with might would reign,
And always set forth something new
Devised to change Thy doctrine true.

May 9

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. *Gal. v. 13.*

* * *

Now follow exhortations and precepts of life and good works. You have obtained liberty, Paul says, through Christ, that is to say, you are above all Laws as touching conscience and before God; you are blessed and saved, Christ is your life. Therefore, although the Law, sin, and death, trouble and terrify you, yet they cannot hurt you nor drive you to despair. And this is your excellent and inestimable liberty. Now, however, it behooves you to take good heed, that you use not that liberty as an occasion to the flesh. This evil is common, and the most pernicious of all others that Satan stirs up in the doctrine of faith; namely, that in very many he turns this liberty, wherewith Christ has made us free, into the liberty of the flesh, "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness" *(Jude 4.)*. The flesh is utterly ignorant of the doctrine of grace; it knows not that we are made righteous, not by works, but by faith only. Therefore, when it hears the doctrine of faith, it abuses and turns it into wantonness, and by and by reasons thus: If we be without Law, let us then live as we please, let us do no good, let us not give to the needy, and let us not suffer any evil, for their is no Law to constrain us. There is danger on either side; but the one is more tolerable than the other. If grace or faith be not preached, no man can be saved; for it is faith alone that justifies and saves. On the other hand, the doctrine of faith is by many understood carnally, and the liberty of the Spirit drawn into the liberty of the flesh. Instead of serving one another in love, they serve their own lusts.

Lord, in Thy kingdom there shall be
No aliens from each other,
But even as he loves himself
Each saint shall love his brother.

May 10

For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. *Gal. v. 14.*

* * *

Paul, after he has once laid the foundation of Christian doctrine, is wont to build gold, silver, and precious stones upon it. Now there is no other foundation, as he himself says to the Corinthians, than Jesus Christ, or the righteousness of Christ (*I Cor. iii. 11*). Upon this foundation he now builds good works, yea, good works indeed; all of which he comprehends in one precept: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Paul would here say: I have hitherto taught you the true spiritual life, and now also I will teach you what are good works indeed, to the end that you may know that the vain and foolish work of ceremonies which the false apostles only urge, is far inferior to the works of charity. For such is the foolishness and madness of all wicked teachers and fantastical spirits, that not only do they leave the true foundation and pure doctrine, but they also continue in superstition; they never attain to good works. Therefore, as Paul says (*I Cor. iii. 12, 13*), they build nothing but wood, hay, and stubble upon the foundation. So the false apostles, which were the most earnest defenders of works, did not teach or require the works of charity, as, that Christians should love one another, that they should be ready to help their neighbors in all necessities, not only with their goods, but also with their body; that is to say, with tongue, hand, heart, and with their whole strength; they only required that circumcision should be kept, that days, months, years, and times should be observed. After they had destroyed the foundation, which is Christ, and darkened the doctrine of faith, it was impossible that there could remain any true use, exercise, or opinion of good works.

We share our mutual woes;
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

May 13

> For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. *Gal. v. 17.*

* * *

When Paul says that the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, he admonishes us that we must feel the concupiscence of the flesh, that is to say, not only carnal lust, but also pride, wrath, heaviness, impatience, incredulity, and suchlike. Notwithstanding, he would have us to feel them, that we consent not unto them, nor accomplish them; that is, that we neither think, speak, nor do those things which the flesh provokes us unto. As, if it moves us to anger, yet we should be angry in suchwise, as we are taught in the fourth Psalm, that we sin not. As if Paul would say: I know that the flesh will provoke you unto wrath, envy, doubting, incredulity, and suchlike; but resist it by the Spirit, that you sin not. But if you forsake the guiding of the Spirit, and follow the flesh, you shall fulfill the lusts of the flesh, and you shall die. So here Paul speaks not only of fleshly lusts, but of the whole kingdom of sin. These two leaders, says Paul, the flesh and the Spirit, are one against another in your body, so that you cannot do what you would. Paul speaks these words to the believing Christians, who have been justified, renewed, and have full forgiveness of sins. Yet notwithstanding, he says that the flesh rebels against the Spirit in them. After the same manner he speaks of himself in the seventh chapter of Romans: "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." But this must be our anchor-hold, that Christ is our only and perfect righteousness.

Thy grace first made me feel my sin,
It taught me to believe;
Then, in believing, peace I found,
And now I live, I live!

May 14

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the Law. *Gal. v. 18.*

* * *

Paul cannot forget the doctrine of faith, but still repeats it, and beats it into their heads; yea, even when he treats of good works. Here some may object: How can it be that we should not be under the Law, when you teach us that we have flesh which lusts against the Spirit, and fights against us, torments us, and brings us into bondage? And indeed we feel sin, and cannot be delivered from the feeling thereof. And what is this else but to be under the Law? But Paul says, Do not let this trouble you; only endeavor to be led by the Spirit, that is to say, show yourselves willing to follow and obey that will which resists the flesh, and does not accomplish the lusts thereof, for this is to be led and to be drawn by the Spirit; then you are not under the Law. So Paul speaks of himself: "With the mind I myself serve the Law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (*Rom. vii. 25*). The faithful then are not under the Law, that is to say, in spirit; for the Law cannot accuse them, although they feel sin, and confess themselves to be sinners; for the power and strength of the Law is taken from it by Christ, "who was made under the Law, that He might redeem them which were under the Law" (*Gal. iv. 4*). So great then is the power and dominion of the Spirit, that the Law cannot accuse the godly, though they commit that which is sin indeed. For Christ is our righteousness, whom we apprehend by faith. He is without all sin, and therefore the Law cannot accuse Him. As long as we cleave fast unto Him, we are led by the Spirit and are free from the Law.

Savior, I follow on,
Guided by Thee,
Seeing not yet the hand
That leadeth me;
Hushed be my heart and still,
Fear I no further ill,
Only to meet Thy will
My will shall be.

May 15

> Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. *Gal. v. 19-21.*

* * *

This place is not unlike to this sentence of Christ: "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit" (*Matt. vii. 16, 17*). Paul teaches the very same thing which Christ taught, that is to say, that works and fruits sufficiently testify whether the trees are good or evil; whether men follow the guiding of the flesh or of the Spirit. And then Paul sets before their eyes the works of the flesh. There were many hypocrites among the Galatians, which outwardly pretended to be godly men, and boasted much of the Spirit, and as touching the words they understood the true doctrine of the Gospel; but they walked not according to the Spirit, but according to the flesh, and performed the works thereof. Whereby Paul manifestly convinces them to be no such holy men indeed as they boasted themselves to be. And lest they should despise this his admonition, he pronounces against them this dreadful sentence, that they should not be inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, to the end that, being thus admonished, they might amend. They which are of Christ crucify their flesh with the affections and lusts thereof.

O watch, and fight, and pray,
The battle ne'er give o'er;
Renew it boldly every day,
And help divine implore.

May 16

> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no Law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. *Gal. v. 22-24.*

* * *

The Apostle calls these Christian virtues the fruits of the Spirit, for they bring with them most excellent fruits and benefits. All they that have them give glory to God, and with the same allure and provoke others to embrace the doctrine and faith of Christ. Then he names these virtues, with which the Christian gives glory to God, and says: "Against such there is no Law." As he says in another place: "The Law is not given to the righteous man." For the righteous live in such a way that they have no need of any Law to admonish or to constrain them, but without constraint of the Law, they willingly do those things which the Law requires. They have received the Holy Ghost by faith, who will not suffer them to be idle. Although the flesh resist, yet they walk after the Spirit. So a Christian accomplishes the Law inwardly by faith, for Christ is the perfection of the Law unto righteousness to all that believe; outwardly by works and remission of sins. This whole place concerning works shows that the true believers are no hypocrites. They are also provoked to anger, uncleanness, etc., which, notwithstanding, they do not do, but crucify the flesh, that is, they repress the wantonness of the flesh, and walk according to the Spirit. When they are admonished by the threatenings of God, whereby He shows that He will severely punish sin, they are afraid to commit sin, and being armed with the Word of God, with faith and prayer, they do not obey the lusts of the flesh.

That gladly I obey Thy Word,
Create in me a new heart, Lord,
And naught but what Thou wilt, desire;
With such new life my soul inspire.

May 17

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another. *Gal. v. 25, 26.*

* * *

The Apostle reckoned before among the works of the flesh heresy and envy, and pronounced sentence against those which are envious, and which are authors of sects, that they should not inherit the kingdom of God. And now again he reproves those which provoke and envy one another. He takes occasion here again to inveigh against that execrable vice of vainglory, which was the cause of the troubles that were in all the churches of Galatia, and has been always most pernicious and hurtful to the whole Church of Christ. When this poison creeps into the church or Christ's kingdom, it cannot be expressed how hurtful it is. For here there is no contention as touching learning, wit, beauty, riches, kingdoms, empires, and suchlike; but as touching salvation or damnation, eternal life or eternal death. Therefore Paul earnestly exhorts ministers of the Word to flee this vice, saying, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." For where the Spirit is, He renews men, and works in them new motions, that is to say, whereas they were before vainglorious, wrathful, and envious, He makes them now humble, gentle, and patient. Such men seek not their own glory, but the glory of God. They do not provoke one another, but in giving honor prevent one another. Contrariwise, they that are desirous of glory, and envy one another, may boast that they have the Spirit, but they deceive themselves; they follow the flesh and the works thereof.

So may they live to Thee alone;
Then hear the welcome word, "Well done!"
And take their crown above;
Enter into their Master's joy,
And all eternity employ
In praise, and bliss, and love.

May 18

> Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. *Gal. vi. 1.*

* * *

He who diligently weighs these words of the Apostle may plainly perceive that he does not speak of errors and offenses against doctrine, but of far lesser sins, into which a man falls not wilfully and of set purpose, but of infirmity. And therefore he uses such gentle language, calling it a fault, not error. Again, wishing to diminish, and as it were, to excuse the sin and to remove the whole fault from man, he adds: "If a man be overtaken," that is to say, beguiled of the devil or of the flesh. This is a sentence full of heavenly comfort. Forasmuch as the saints in this life do not only live in the flesh, but now and then also, through the enticement of the devil, fulfill the lust of the flesh, that is to say, fall into impatience, envy, wrath, error, doubting, distrust, and the like (for Satan always assails both, the purity of doctrine, which he labors to take away by sects and dissensions, and also the soundness of life, which he corrupts with daily offenses); therefore Paul teaches how such men who are fallen should be dealt with, namely; that they which are strong should raise up and restore them again with the spirit of meekness. As the Holy Ghost is precise in maintaining and defending the doctrine of faith, so is He mild and pitiful in forbearing and qualifying men's sins, if they which have committed them be so sorrowful for the same. "There is no sin," says Augustine, "which any man has done, but another man may do the same." We stand on slippery ground; therefore if we wax proud and leave off to do our duty, there is nothing so easy for us as to fall.

In sinful wrath thou shalt not kill,
Nor hate, nor render ill for ill;
Be patient and of gentle mood,
And to thy foe do thou good.
Have mercy, Lord!

May 19

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. *Gal. vi. 2.*

* * *

The law of Christ is the law of love. Christ, after He had redeemed us, renewed us, and made us His Church, gave us no other law but the law of mutual love: "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." *(John xiii. 34).* And to love is not to wish well one to another, but it is to bear another's burden, that is, to bear those things which are grievous and which you do not willingly bear. Therefore Christians must have strong shoulders, that they may bear also the weakness of their brethren; for, says Paul, they have burdens and troubles. Faithful teachers see in the Church many errors and offenses which they are compelled to bear. In the commonwealth subjects are never so obedient to the laws of the magistrates as they should be. In household affairs many things are done which displease the master of the house. But if we bear and wink at our own vices and offenses which we daily commit, let us also bear other men's faults, according to this saying: "Bear ye one another's burdens," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." *(Rom. xiii. 9).* Seeing then that there are vices in every state of life and in all men, therefore Paul sets forth the law of Christ unto the faithful, whereby he exhorts them to bear one another's burden. They which willingly hear the Word of God and believe, and yet notwithstanding, against their will, fall into sin, and, after they are admonished, do not only receive such admonition gladly, but also detest their sin and endeavor to amend, these are they that are overtaken with sin, and have the burdens that Paul commends us to bear.

We share our mutual woes;
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

May 20

For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. *Gal. vi. 3.*

* * *

Here again Paul reprehends the authors of sects, and paints them out in their right colors; namely, that they are merciless, without compassion, such as despise the weak and will not vouchsafe to bear their burdens, whom nothing can please but what they themselves do, who will always be your bitter enemies, unless you commend whatever they say or do and in all things conduct yourself according to their will. Of all men, therefore, they are the proudest and dare take upon themselves all things. Of these Paul says they think themselves to be something when they are nothing. They deceive themselves with the foolish persuasions of their own wisdom and holiness. They understand nothing, therefore, either of Christ or of the law of Christ; for if they did, they would say: Brother, you are infected with such a vice, and I am infected with another. God has forgiven me ten thousand talents, and I will forgive you an hundred pence *(Matt. xviii. 24, 28)*. Pastors ought so to behave themselves toward those over whom they have taken charge, that they might love and reverence them, not for their person, but for their office and Christian virtues, which especially ought to shine in them. Paul therefore, in this place, has rightly painted out such severe and merciless saints who, being puffed up with their own vain dreams, have a marvelous persuasion of their own knowledge and holiness, and yet in very deed they are nothing, and do but deceive themselves.

Bow down Thine ear, almighty Lord,
And hear Thy Church's suppliant cry
For all who preach Thy saving Word,
And wait upon Thy ministry.

May 21

> But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. *Gal. vi. 4.*

* * *

The desire of vainglory is an odious and cursed vice; it is the occasion of all evils, and troubles many consciences. And especially in spiritual matters it is such an evil as is incurable. The Apostle here speaks especially of the work of the ministry, and inveighs against those vain-glorious heads, which with their fantastical opinions trouble well-instructed consciences. And this is the property of those which are infected with this poison of vainglory: they have no regard whether their works, that is to say, their ministry, be pure, simple, and faithful, or not; but this only they seek, that they may have the praise of the people. These proud and vainglorious teachers join these three vices together: They are greedy of glory; they are marvelously witty and wily in finding fault with other men's doings and sayings, thereby to purchase the love, good will, and praise of the people; and when they have once gotten a name (though it be by other men's travail), they become so full of their own conceit, that they dare venture upon all things. He that truly and faithfully executes his office cares not what the world says of him, whether the world praise or dispraise him: but he has praise in himself, which is the testimony of his conscience, and the praise or glory which is of God. This glory is uncorrupt and steadfast; for it depends not on other men's judgments, but of our own consciences, which bear us witness that we have taught the Word purely, ministered the Sacraments rightly, and have done all things well, and therefore it cannot be taken from us.

So may they live to Thee alone;
Then hear the welcome word, "Well done!"
And take their crown above;
Enter into their Master's joy,
And all eternity employ
In praise, and bliss, and love.

May 22

For every one shall bear his own burden. *Gal. vi. 5.*

* * *

This is, as it were, the reason or confirmation of the former sentence, lest any man should lean to other men's judgments in praising and commending of him. As if he would say: It is not good for you to seek glory in another, and not in yourself; for in the agony of death, and the last judgment, it shall not profit you that others have praised you; for other men shall not bear your burden, but you must stand before the judgment seat of Christ and bear your burden alone. These your praisers shall help you nothing. For when you die, these praises will cease. And in that day, when the Lord will judge the secrets of all hearts, the witness of your own conscience must stand either with you or against you *(Rom. ii. 15)*. Against you, if you glory in other men; with you, if you have it in yourself, that is, if your conscience bears witness that you have done your duty in the ministry of the Word, or otherwise, according to your calling, sincerely and faithfully, having respect to the glory of God only and the salvation of souls. These words: "Every one shall bear his own burden," are very vehement and ought so to terrify us that we should not be desirous of vainglory. Our ministry is good and sound, for we seek thereby the salvation of souls. But the ministry of the fantastical heads is not so, for they seek their own praise. Paul speaks so much against this vice of vainglory, because in suppressing it no man is so strong, but that he has need of continual prayer, and only the Holy Ghost can preserve us from being infected with this vice.

On what has now been sown,
Thy blessing, Lord, bestow;
The power is Thine alone
To make it spring and grow:
Do Thou the gracious harvest raise,
And Thou alone shalt have the praise.

May 23

Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. *Gal. vi. 6.*

* * *

Here Paul preaches to the disciples or hearers of the Word, commanding them to bestow all good things upon those which have taught and instructed them in the Word. He here shows how necessary this commandment is concerning the maintenance of the ministers of the Church. For Satan can abide nothing less than the light of the Gospel. Therefore, when he sees that it begins to shine, then he rages and goes about with all main and might to quench it. Moreover, Satan turns men particularly also from the Gospel by overmuch fullness. For when the Gospel is diligently and daily preached, many being glutted therewith begin to loathe it, and little by little become negligent and untoward to all godly exercises. Again, Satan seeks to prevent parents from bringing up their children in the study of the Holy Scriptures, but to employ them rather entirely to remunerative arts or occupations. It is not without cause, therefore, that Paul warns the hearers of the Gospel to make their pastors and teachers partakers with them in all good things. "If we (he says to the Corinthians) have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things" *(I Cor. ix. 11)*? The hearers thereof ought to minister carnal things to them of whom they have received spiritual things. For it is impossible that such as are godly indeed should suffer their pastors to live in necessity and penury.

Oh, may Thy people faithful be,
And in Thy pastors honor Thee,
And with them work, and for them pray,
And gladly Thee in them obey;
Receive the prophet of the Lord,
And gain the prophet's own reward!

May 24

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall be also reap. *Gal. vi. 7.*

* * *

Paul now adds to his former reprehension and exhortation a threatening: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." He touches to the quick the perverseness of those who despise the ministry. "God is not mocked," that is to say, God does not suffer Himself to be mocked in His ministers. For He says: "He that despiseth you, despiseth Me" *(Luke x. 16)*. And to Samuel He says: "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me" (*I Sam. viii. 7*). Therefore, although God defer His punishment for a season, yet when He sees fit, He will find out the mockers, and will punish this contempt of His Word and bitter hatred which they bear against His ministers. Therefore they deceive not God but themselves. They shall not laugh at God, but He will laugh at them *(Ps. ii.)*. They shall feel, when death approaches, whether they have mocked themselves or God's ministers, or rather, not God's ministers, but God Himself, as Paul says here. All these things tend to this purpose, that ministers should be nourished and maintained. Men must be admonished hereof, that they may know that they ought to yield to their pastors both reverence and a necessary living. Our Savior teaches the same thing: "Eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire" *(Luke x. 7)*. And Paul says in another place: "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel" *(I Cor. ix. 14)*.

Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee,
Repaid a thousand-fold will be;
Then gladly will we give to Thee
Who givest all.

May 25

> For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. *Gal. vi. 8.*

* * *

Paul adds a similitude and an allegory. And this general sentence of sowing he applies to the particular matter of nourishing and maintaining the ministers of the Word, saying: "He that soweth to the Spirit," etc., that is to say, He that cherisheth the teachers of God's Word, does a spiritual work and shall reap everlasting life. Here rises a question, whether we deserve eternal life by good works. For so Paul seems to avouch in this place. But it is very necessary, after the example of Paul, to exhort the faithful to good works, that is, to exercise their faith by their works. For if faith is not followed by works, it is manifest that such faith is not true faith. Therefore the Apostle says: "He that soweth to the flesh, that is to say, he that gives nothing to the ministers of God's Word, but only feeds and cares for himself, that man shall of the flesh reap corruption, for the goods of the wicked shall waste away, and they themselves also at length shamefully perish." Although this nourishing the ministers of the Church is but a corporal thing, yet notwithstanding, Paul calls it a sowing to the Spirit. Contrariwise, when men greedily scrape together what they can, and seek only their own gain, he calls it a sowing to the flesh. He pronounces those who sow to the Spirit blessed both in this life and in the life to come; and the others which sow in the flesh, to be both accursed in this life and in the life to come.

Now then the ceaseless shower
Of Gospel blessings send,
And let the soul-converting power
Thy ministers attend.
On multitudes confer
The heart renewing love,
And by the joy of grace prepare
For fuller joys above.

May 26

> And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. *Gal. vi. 9, 10.*

* * *

The Apostle here passes from the particular to the general, and exhorts generally to all good works, not only toward the ministers of the Word, but also toward all other men, and that without weariness. For it is an easy matter for a man to do good once or twice, but to continue and not be discouraged through the ingratitude and perverseness of those to whom he has done good, that is hard. Therefore he exhorts not only to do good, but also not to weary in doing good. And then adds a promise: "For in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Wait and look for the perpetual harvest that is to come, and then no ingratitude or perverse dealings of men shall be able to pluck you away from well doing. He further reminds us: Let us do good while we have the opportunity, "while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work" *(John ix. 4)*. Indeed, men work many things when the light of truth is taken away, but all in vain; for they walk in darkness and know not whither they go, and therefore all their life, works, sufferings, and death are in vain *(John xii. 35)*. And with this he touches the Galatians. He means to say: Unless you continue in the sound doctrine which you have received of me, your working of much good, your suffering of many troubles, and such other things, profit you nothing. He terms them of the household of faith who are joined with us in the fellowship of faith.

Let me be Thine forever,
Thou faithful God and Lord;
Let me forsake Thee never,
Nor wander from Thy Word;
Lord, do not let me waver,
But give me steadfastness,
And for such grace forever
Thy holy name I'll bless.

May 27

> Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. *Gal. vi. 11, 12.*

* * *

He closes his Epistle with an exhortation to the faithful and with a sharp rebuke or invective against the false apostles. He speaks of his long letter written with his own hand to show his affection for them. Then he turns on the false apostles, and accuses them sharply. Your teachers, he says to the Galatians, are such as do not regard the glory of Christ above all things, and the salvation of your souls, but only seek their own glory; secondly, they wish to escape the cross; and thirdly, they do not understand what they teach. He shows the Galatians that these apostles are worthy to be shunned by all men. And Paul does the false apostles no wrong in thus inveighing against them, which was his duty as an Apostle of Christ, for they hated, persecuted, and overthrew the doctrine of Christ. These teachers sought their own glory and not Christ's. They made their belly their god, and shunned the cross. They preached circumcision, and the righteousness of the flesh, lest the Jews should persecute and hate them. Paul here uses the word "constrain," for circumcision is nothing in itself, but to be compelled to receive it, and when a man has received it, to attribute to it righteousness and holiness, this is injury to Christ.

> Blest is the man to whom the Lord
> Imputes not his iniquities;
> He pleads no merit of reward,
> And not on works, but grace relies.

May 28

For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the Law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. *Gal. vi. 13.*

* * *

Here Paul shows them what manner of teachers they have. Though they keep the Law outwardly, yet in keeping it they keep it not. For without the Holy Ghost the Law cannot be kept. But the Holy Ghost cannot be received without Christ, and where the Holy Ghost does not dwell, there dwells an unclean spirit, that is to say, one who despises God and seeks his own gain. Therefore all that he does toward keeping the Law is mere hypocrisy, and therefore double sin. This may be applied to other works also. He that works, suffers, or prays without Christ, works, prays and suffers in vain, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" *(Rom. xiv. 23)*. It profits a man nothing to be outwardly circumcised, to fast, to pray, or to do any other work, if he despises grace, forgiveness of sin, and the work of Christ, and be puffed up with the opinion of his own righteousness. And why do the false apostles want you to be circumcised? That they may glory in your flesh. And what do you gain but that the false apostles may glory that they are your teachers and you are their disciples? They have not the Word of the Spirit, therefore it is impossible for you to receive the Spirit by their preaching. They only exercise your flesh, making you fleshly justiciaries or justifiers of yourselves, whereby you reap nothing but unprofitable labor and damnation.

Not what these hands have done
Can save this guilty soul;
Not what this toiling flesh has borne
Can make my spirit whole.

May 29

> But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto Me, and I unto the world. *Gal. vi. 14.*

* * *

The Apostle closes up the matter with an expression of indignation. "God forbid," says he. Let them glory in the flesh who wish, and let them perish with their cursed glory. As for me, I desire no other glory, but that whereby I glory and rejoice in the cross of Christ. Here Paul shows what is the glory and rejoicing of Christians: We glory and rejoice in the tribulations, reproaches, infirmities for Christ's sake. The world judges of the Christians that they are wretched and miserable men, but they also most cruelly persecute, condemn, and kill the Christians as pernicious plagues of the spiritual and worldly kingdom. But the Christians glory, because they suffer these things for Christ's sake, whose benefit and glory they set forth. Now, Paul would say, our glory is increased and confirmed principally by these two things: first, because we are certain that our doctrine is sound and perfect; secondly, because our cross and suffering is the suffering of Christ. We suffer the hatred and persecution of our adversaries for no other reason, but because we preach Christ faithfully and purely. If we would deny Him, and approve their pernicious errors and wicked religion, they would not only cease to hate us, but would also offer us riches and honor. Jesus says: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" *(John xv. 19)*.

In the cross of Christ I glory,
Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred glory
Gathers round its head sublime.

May 30

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. *Gal. vi. 15.*

* * *

It may seem strange that Paul should say, "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision," since they are contrary one to the other, and therefore either one or the other should prevail. But Paul here denies that either one or the other avails anything. This is what he means: We must mount up higher; for circumcision and uncircumcision are things of no such importance that they are able to obtain righteousness before God. The Jews were greatly offended when they heard that circumcision avails nothing. Reason and the will of the flesh does not understand this. But we are taught from the Word of God that there is nothing under the sun which avails unto righteousness before God, but Christ only, or, as Paul says here, a new creature. Politic laws, men's traditions, ceremonies of the Church, yea, and the Law of Moses avail not unto righteousness before God. We may use them as things both good and necessary, but in their place and time. Now, a new creature, whereby the image of God is renewed, is not made by any color or counterfeiting of good works, but by Christ, by whom it was created after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness. A new creature is the work of the Holy Ghost, which cleanses the heart by faith, and works the fear of God, love, chastity, and other Christian virtues. A new sense and a new judgment is given by the Holy Ghost. The mind is renewed, after which follows a change in the members and senses of the whole body.

Create in me a new heart, Lord,
That gladly I obey Thy Word,
And naught but what Thou wilt, desire;
With such new life my soul inspire.

May 31

> And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. *Gal. vi. 16-18.*

* * *

Paul here adds: This is the only and true rule wherein we ought to walk, namely, the new creature. which is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but the new man created unto the image of God in righteousness and true holiness. Those who effect a hypocritical and wicked righteousness and holiness, which hopes to be justified by the keeping of their rule, are cruel enemies of the truth. But the rule of which Paul speaks here, is blessed, by which we live in the faith of Christ, and are made new creatures by the Holy Ghost. To such belong peace, that is, the favor of God, forgiveness of sins, and help in affliction. Yea, they which walk after this rule, though they be overtaken with any sin, because they are the children of grace and peace, mercy upholds them. They are the true Israel of God, who with faithful Abraham believe the promises of God offered in Christ, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. Then he concludes by saying: I have faithfully taught the Gospel as I have received it by the revelation of Jesus Christ; whoso will not follow it, let him follow what he will, just so that he trouble me no more, for I show in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Because I openly confess that no man can obtain the favor of God, righteousness, and salvation but by Christ alone, these marks (his stripes and sufferings) are laid upon me by the world and the devil. Finally, he bids them farewell in the same words with which he began his Epistle: a prayer that God's grace and blessing may rest upon them.

Oft in sorrow, oft in woe,
Onward, Christians, onward go;
Bear the toil, maintain the strife,
Strengthened with the Bread of life.

June 1

> Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. *I Pet. i. 1, 2.*

* * *

This is the superscription and subscription. Here you quickly perceive that it is the Gospel which St. Peter preaches. He calls himself an apostle, that is, one sent to declare a message. So he would now say: I am an apostle of Jesus Christ, that is, I have a command from Jesus Christ that I, from Christ, am to proclaim to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, etc. Thus he writes to those who had previously been heathen, but were now converted to the faith, and had joined the believing Jews. They are elect, he says. How? Not of themselves, but according to God's purpose, for we are unable to raise ourselves to heaven, or create faith within ourselves. *Through sanctification of the Spirit.* God has predestinated us that we should be holy. Holiness is not that which consists in the estate of monks, priests, and nuns; it is a spiritual word, meaning that there is an inward holiness in the spirit before God. *Unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.* Hereby, he says, are we made holy, if we are obedient and believe the Word of Christ and are sprinkled with His blood. We are saved through faith in Christ and His Word. *Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.* Grace is God's favor, which now begins in us, but which must continue to increase and grow even till death. Such is the desire of St. Peter for those that believed, and it is a true Christian greeting, with which all Christians might greet one another.

> To Thee, Lord Jesus, thanks we give,
> Who diedst for us, that we might live,
> And through Thy holy, precious blood,
> Hast made us righteous before God.

June 2

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. *I Pet. i. 3.*

* * *

In this preface you perceive a truly apostolic address and introduction to the matters in hand. For he at once exhibits and makes manifest what Christ is and what we have attained through Him, when He says that God has begotten us again to a lively hope through the resurrection of Christ. Thus all good things are bestowed upon us by the Father, not for any merit of ours, but of pure mercy. Christ, through His resurrection, has brought us to the Father. Oh, it is a blessing infinitely vast that is bestowed upon us through Christ, that we may go into the presence of the Father and claim the inheritance of which St. Peter here speaks! There is no more law and vengeance before us. He vexes and chastises us no more, but shows us the greatest friendship, creates us anew, and appoints us, not to do some work or works, but produces within us an entirely new birth and new being, that we should be something different from what we were before when we were Adam's children. *To a lively hope.* While we remain on earth, we must live in hope. For although we are assured that through faith we have all the good things of God, still you do not as yet behold them. But the matter exists in hope. This he calls the hope of life. We call it a living hope, that is, one in which we certainly expect and may be assured of eternal life.

> Dear Refuge of my weary soul,
> On Thee, when sorrows rise,
> On Thee, when waves of trouble roll,
> My fainting hope relies.

June 3

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. *I Pet. i. 4.*

* * *

We hope not for a blessing or an inheritance that is far off. But we live in the hope of an inheritance that is just at hand, and that is imperishable as well as undefiled and unfading. This blessing is ours henceforth and forever, although we do not now behold it. These are powerful and excellent words; into whosesoever mind they enter, he will, I imagine, not be greatly anxious after worldly good and pleasure. How can it be possible that one who assuredly believes this, should yet cleave to perishable possessions and lusts? If worldly good is presented in contrast with this, it is at once seen how it all passes away and endures but for a time; but this alone lasts forever and will never consume away. Besides, that is all impure and defiles us, for there is no man so devoted that worldly prosperity will not soil his purity. But this inheritance alone is pure, whoever has it is ever undefiled; it will not fade, it endures and does not corrupt. All that is on earth, however hard it be, is yet changeable, and has no permanence. On earth there is no pleasure that will not at length become irksome, for we see that men grow weary of all things; but with this blessing such is not the case. Certain it is that our inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. It is only for a little while concealed from us, until we close our eyes and are buried, when, if we believe, we shall surely find and behold it.

There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Eternal day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.

June 4

Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. *I Pet. i. 5.*

* * *

We wait for this priceless inheritance, he says, in the hope to which we have attained through faith. For this is their order of succession: From the Word follows faith, from faith is the new birth, from the new birth we pass to hope, so that we certainly expect and are assured of the blessing. So that Peter has here asserted, in a truly Christian manner, that it must take place by faith, not by our own works. But what does St. Peter mean when he says: Ye are kept by the power of God unto salvation? We have been taught from Scripture that we cannot do the least work without God's Spirit. How, then, by our own power should we be able to do the highest work, namely, believe? God's power must be present and work within us, in order that we may believe, as Paul also says *(Eph. i. 17-19)*: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom . . . that ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power." If God produces faith in men, it is certainly as great a work as though He recreated heaven and earth. Wherever this power of God is wanting, there is neither genuine faith nor good works, nothing but error and blindness. But He keeps us, who believe, in the right understanding, so that we fall not into condemnation, but attain to salvation. *Ready to be revealed in the last time.* That is, the inheritance that is appointed for them was long ago acquired, and prepared from the foundation of the world, but now is hidden, as yet covered up, reserved, and sealed. But this is only for a little while, when in a moment it shall be opened and revealed, so that we shall behold it.

Thy work alone, O Christ,
Can ease this weight of sin:
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God,
Can give me peace within.

June 5

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations. *I Pet. i. 6.*

* * *

Are you a Christian and do you look for this inheritance or this salvation? Then you must cleave to this alone, and despise all that is upon earth, and confess that all worldly reason, wisdom, and glory are nothing. This is a thing the world will not be able to bear; wherefore you are to expect that men shall condemn and persecute you. Thus St. Peter joins faith, hope, and the holy cross together, for one follows upon the other. And here he gives us a source of consolation if we suffer and are persecuted. This sadness shall last a little while; afterward ye shall be exceeding glad, for this salvation is already prepared for you; wherefore be patient under your sufferings. This is moreover a truly Christian consolation, not such comfort as human doctrines give, which attempt nothing more than to find relief from outward ill. I speak not of bodily comfort, he would say; it is no real injury that you have to endure outward ill, only go onward vigorously and be steadfast. Inquire not how you may be free from the trouble, but think within yourself: My inheritance is prepared and held out to me; it is only a short time before my suffering must cease. Thus we should lay aside temporal consolations, and over against them place that eternal consolation which we have in God.

My God hath all things in His keeping,
He is the ever faithful Friend;
He grants me laughter after weeping,
And all His ways in blessings end.
His love endures eternally:
What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me.

June 6

> That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. *I Pet. i. 7.*

* * *

This should be the end of the cross and all kinds of reverses—to enable us to distinguish between false and real faith. God lays His hand upon us, therefore, to try our faith and reveal it to the world, so that others may be induced to believe, and we also be praised and honored. For just as we exalt God, so will He in return exalt, esteem, and honor us. Scripture throughout likens temptation to fire. Thus St. Peter here compares the gold that is tried by fire to the trial of faith by temptation and suffering. The fire does not take away from the gold, but it makes it pure and bright, so that all dross is removed. So God has imposed the cross upon all Christians, that they might thereby be purified. We need such fire and cross as this daily, because of the old, corrupt Adam. Therefore God throws us into the midst of the fire, that is, into suffering, shame and calamity, so that we may become more and more purified, until we die. Thence will result a noble reward—praise and glory when Christ shall be revealed.

Whatever God ordains is good!
He never will deceive me;
He leads me by the proper path,
I know He will not leave me;
And take content, What He hath sent;
His hand that sends my sadness,
Will turn my tears to gladness.

June 7

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. *I Pet. i, 8, 9.*

* * *

An unspeakably glorious joy shall that be, says St. Peter, whereof we have honor and praise. The world has such a joy that we receive nothing from it but shame, and of which we are compelled to be ashamed. Here St. Peter has evidently spoken of future joy—and there is scarcely so clear a passage on the subject of the future joy as the one in this place—and still he finds himself unable to express it. This is one point of the introduction, in which the Apostle has shown what faith in Christ is, and how we must be tried and purified by reverse and suffering, which God appoints for us. After this he shows how this faith is comprehended and promised in Scripture.

And when within that lovely paradise
At last I safely dwell,
From out my soul what songs of bliss shall rise,
What joy my lips shall tell,
While holy saints are singing.
Hosannas o'er and o'er,
Pure hallelujahs ringing
Around me evermore.

June 8

> Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. *I Pet. i. 10, 11.*

* * *

St. Peter would say: Although the prophets have not particularly known of a set and definite time, yet have they in general testified to all the circumstances of time and place: as that Christ should suffer, and what death He should die, and that the Gentiles should believe on Him; so that one might certainly know by these signs when the time had come. All that we now preach, he says, the prophets previously foretold and described in the most explicit manner, just as the Holy Spirit revealed it to them. *When it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.* This may be understood of both kinds of suffering—that which Christ and we also suffer. For just as the faith, the name, the Word, and work of Christ are mine, inasmuch as I believe on Him, so His suffering is also mine, since I suffer also for His sake. This is then our consolation in all our sufferings that we experience, that all that we suffer Christ shares with us, that He accounts it all His own suffering. But this we must also understand, that Christ was not glorified before He suffered, so that we are to bear our cross with Him first, that afterward we may share His joy.

> Let not sorrow dim your eye,
> Soon shall every tear be dry;
> Let not woe your course impede,
> Great your help, if great your need.

June 9

> Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. *I Pet. i. 12.*

* * *

That is, the prophets possessed enough thereof to know the fact. But that they should have left it behind them (on record) calls for our gratitude; they have become our servants, and have so ministered to us, that we, through them, might go to school and learn the same lesson. Such great things have the Apostles declared to us, through the Holy Spirit, which descended upon them from heaven, as even the angels would gladly look into. When this Spirit opens our eyes and makes us see what the Gospel is, we shall have an appetite for it and a joy in it, although we cannot behold it with bodily eyes, but must believe that we are partakers and fellow-heirs of the righteousness, truth, salvation, and all the blessings which God has to bestow. For since He has given us His only Son, that highest good, He will also, through Him, give us all good things, riches and treasures, whereof the angels in heaven have all their joy, and of which they are most desirous. All this is offered to us through the Gospel, and if we believe we shall also have a like desire for them. But our desire for them cannot be as perfect as that of the angels, so long as we live on earth. However, in heaven it is so great that no human heart can conceive it. If we reach that place we shall ourselves feel it.

> Ah, then my spirit faints
> To reach the land I love;
> The bright inheritance of saints,
> Jerusalem above!

June 10

> Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. *I Pet. i. 13.*

* * *

Here Peter speaks of a spiritual girding of the mind, just as one girds his sword to the loins of his body. This is an admonition to faith, and the sense is this: While such things are preached to you and bestowed upon you through the Gospel as the angels would rejoice and be desirous to behold, rely on them and fix your confidence thereon with all firmness, so that it shall be a real faith, and not a painted or fictitious fancy or dream. As though he would say: Ye have now heard the Gospel and have come to believe, therefore see to it that you abide therein, and do not suffer yourselves to be drawn away with false doctrine, which will cause you to waver and run hither and thither with works. Be sober, he says. To be sober is the chief work of faith. For though a man has been justified, he still is not secure from evil lusts. Faith has indeed begun to subdue the flesh, but this is ever bestirring itself, and likewise running riot in all sorts of lusts, which would gladly break forth again and act after their own will. Therefore the spirit must daily work to restrain and subdue it. *And hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* The Christian faith is of such a nature that it plants itself freely on the Word of God with entire confidence, ventures freely thereupon, and goes joyfully onward. Therefore the Apostle would have us venture thereon cheerfully, for God, who offers us such grace, will surely not deceive us.

> Blest is the man to whom the Lord
> Imputes not his iniquities;
> He pleads no merit of reward,
> And not on works, but grace relies.

June 11

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. *I Pet. i. 14.*

* * *

That is, conduct yourselves as obedient children. Obedience in Scripture means faith. Whoever hears the Word of God and believes thereon is an obedient child of God. Therefore whatever is not the Word of God, tread it under your feet and pay no attention to it. *Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in ignorance.* That is, you should not exhibit such ostentation and lead such a course of life as before. Once you were godless, and lived in lewdness, gluttony, drunkenness, avarice, pride, anger, envy, and hatred, which was an evil, heathen-like state, and one of unbelief, and when you went into such a state like the blind, you did not know what you were doing. Avoid now those same evil lusts. Here you perceive how he makes the charge against ignorance, from which all evil proceeds. For where faith and knowledge are wanting, there remains mere error and blindness, so that men are ignorant of what is right and wrong, insomuch that the people fall into every kind of vice.

Let us ever walk with Jesus,
Follow His example pure,
Flee the world, that would deceive us
And to sin our soul allure.
Ever in His footsteps treading,
Body here, yet soul above,
Full of faith and hope and love,
Let us do the Father's bidding.
Faithful Lord, abide with me,
Savior, lead, I follow Thee.

June 12

But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy. *I Pet. i. 15, 16.*

* * *

Here St. Peter quotes a passage from the Old Testament, *(Lev. xix. 2)*, where God says: Ye shall be holy; for I am holy. That is, since I am your Lord and God, and you are My people, you too must be as I am. For a faithful master is careful that his people should be like him, and walk in obedience and be conformed to his will. As then God our Master is holy, so are His people holy also, and we are all holy if we walk in faith. The word holy means that which is God's own, and which belongs to Him alone, or, as we render it, consecrated. Thus St. Peter here says: You are merely required to give God His own; therefore beware that you do not suffer yourselves to be led back again to worldly lusts, but let God alone rule, live, and work within you: then shall you be holy, even as He is holy. Thus he has hitherto described the grace which is extended to us through the Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, and has taught us how we should conduct ourselves; namely, that we abide in a pure, inviolate mind of faith. The greatest work that follows faith is this, that with my mouth I should confess Christ. Thereafter follow also other works, which must all be directed to this end, that I may thereby serve my neighbor. All of which God must work in us; for it profits not that we should lead a carnal life and do whatever we please.

Enlarge my heart to make Thee room;
Enter, and in me ever stay:
The crooked then shall straight become;
The darkness shall be lost in day.

June 13

> And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. *I Pet. i. 17.*

* * *

That is, stand in fear before the Father—not of pain and punishment, as the Christless and even the devil are afraid, but lest He forsake you and withdraw His hand, just as a dutiful child is afraid lest he provoke his father, and do something that might displease him. Such a fear would God have within us, that we guard ourselves against sin, and serve our neighbor while we live here upon earth. A Christian, if he truly believes, possesses all the good things of God and is God's child. But the time which he yet lives is only a pilgrimage: for the spirit is already in heaven by faith, through which he becomes lord over all things. But to this end God permits him yet to live in the flesh, and his body to remain on earth, that he may help others and bring them also to heaven. Therefore we are to use all things on earth as a guest who goes on wearily and arrives at an inn, where he must tarry all night, and can receive nothing from it but food and lodging; yet he does not say that the property of the inn is his. So must we also proceed in regard to our temporal possessions, as though they were not ours, and we enjoyed only so much of them as is needful to sustain the body, and with the rest we are to help our neighbor. Thus the Christian life is only a night's sojourning: for we have here no abiding city, but must find it, where our Father is, in heaven.

My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul; how near
At times to faith's foreseeing eye
The golden gates appear!

June 14

> Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers. *I Pet. i. 18.*

* * *

This should draw you, he would say, to the fear of God, that you should remember how much it has cost that you might be redeemed. Before, you were citizens of the world and were held in subjection to the devil, but now God has rescued you from such a state and has set you firm in another, so that your citizenship is in heaven, while you are strangers and guests upon earth. See at how great a cost God has reclaimed you and how great the treasure is wherewith you are purchased and brought into this state to become the children of God! Wherefore pass your sojourning in fear; see to it that you do not despise such redemption and lose the noble, precious treasure. Here it is well to mark that Peter says you are ransomed from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers. This is as much as: All that which our fathers have ordained and done was evil. What from them has been taught you concerning the worship of God is also evil, for it has cost the Son of God His blood to redeem people therefrom. Whatever therefore has not been washed in this blood is all poisoned and cursed by reason of the flesh. The more a man undertakes to make himself righteous and has not Christ, the more he confounds himself and sinks deeper in blindness and wickedness, and condemns himself by rejecting this precious blood.

Behold the Savior of mankind
Nailed to the shameful tree!
How vast the love that Him inclined
To bleed and die for Thee!

June 15

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot. *I Pet. i. 19.*

* * *

What now is the treasure wherewith you are ransomed? Not corruptible gold or silver, but the precious blood of Christ, the Son of God. The treasure is so costly and noble that no human sense or reason can conceive it, insomuch that only one drop of this innocent blood were more than enough for the sin of the world. Yet the Father has been willing to dispense His grace so richly upon us, and denied Himself so much, that He suffered Christ His Son to shed all His blood for us, and bestowed upon us the whole treasure. Therefore He would not have us disregard such great grace and count it as a small matter, but continue to be on our guard and live in fear, that this treasure might not be taken away from us. When he says here, You are redeemed by the blood of Christ, as of an innocent and unspotted Lamb, he would refer to the Scripture and explain that which is contained in the prophets and Moses, as *(Isa. liii. 7)*: "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." All this he here explains and says: This Lamb is Christ, and as the one of old was to be unspotted, so must this also, whose blood is shed for us, be unspotted and innocent.

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

June 16

> Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you. *I Pet. i. 20.*

* * *

That is, we have not deserved nor even asked this of God, that the precious blood of Christ should be shed for us. Therefore we can glory in no respect. Glory belongs to none but God alone. God has promised and revealed, or made known to us, not for any merit of ours, that which He from all eternity had provided and foreordained before the world was made. In the prophets it is indeed promised, yet dimly and not openly, but now, since Christ's resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit, it is publicly preached and disseminated throughout the whole world. This is now the latter age (the last time), as St. Peter says, wherein we live—now, from the ascension of Christ till the last day. So the Apostles and prophets and Christ Himself also call it the last hour. Not that the last day was to come immediately after Christ's ascension, but because after this preaching of the Gospel of Christ no other should ever come, and there will be no further revelation or manifestation except as this is explained and revealed. God permits the world to stand longer, merely that His name may be more widely honored and praised, although He Himself is now fully revealed.

O great King of glory come!
Let me be Thy living temple;
Enter Thou into my heart;
Though I am but poor and simple,
Yet my riches then shall be,
That Thou reignest, Lord, in me.

June 17

> For you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. *I Pet. i. 21.*

* * *

For our sakes, he says, is the Gospel revealed. For God and the Lord Christ have not needed it, but have done it for our profit, that we might believe on them. And that not through ourselves, but through Christ, who intercedes for us with the Father, who hath raised Him from the dead, that He might be Lord over all things. And whosoever believes on Him possesses all His good things and through Him has access to the Father. Faith alone must save us, but it must be faith in God. You must have the friendship of God, that you may boast that He is your Father and that you are His child and confide in Him even more than in your beloved father and mother; that He will help you in all your troubles, and this only through the one Mediator and Savior, the Lord Christ. Such faith comes not, he says, from human power, but God creates it in us, because Christ has merited it by His blood, to whom He has given glory and whom He has seated at His right hand that He by God's power should produce faith in us.

Salvation unto us has come,
By God's free grace and favor,
Good works cannot avert our doom.
They help and save us never:
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is the Mediator.

June 18

> Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently. *I Pet. i. 22.*

* * *

St. Peter speaks here of the fruit of faith, to wit, that we should purify our souls, through obedience to the truth in the Spirit. For where there is real faith, it brings the body in subjection to itself, and controls the fleshly lust; and although it does not entirely destroy it, yet it makes it subject and obedient to the Spirit, and holds it in check. St. Peter would say: If you would remain chaste, then must you render obedience to the truth in the Spirit, that is, we must not only read and hear the Word of God, but apprehend it in our hearts. *Unto unfeigned love of the brethren.* To what end, then, are we to live a chaste, holy life? In order that we may be saved thereby? No! but in order that I may be of service to others, for I must first control my body and the flesh by the Spirit, and thus I can afterward be of service to others. *See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.* The Apostles Peter and Paul distinguish brotherly love and love in general. Brotherhood is, that Christians should dwell altogether as brethren, and make no distinctions between themselves. For since we all have a common Christ, one baptism, one faith, one treasure, I am no better than thou; that which thou hast, I have also, and I am just as rich as thou. Therefore as we have the grace of Christ and all spiritual blessings in common, so should we also hold body and life, property and honor, in common, that one should be of service to another in all things.

My Wisdom and my Guide,
My Counsellor Thou art:
O let me never leave Thy side,
Nor from Thy paths depart.

June 19

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. *I Pet. i. 23.*

* * *

Again, we should do this because we are not what we were before (he says), but have become new creatures. This has not come to pass through works, but is a consequence of the new birth. For you cannot make the new man, but he must grow, or be born; as a husbandman cannot make a tree, but it must grow, itself, out of the earth. This, therefore, is what the Apostle would say: Since you then, have become new creatures, you should conduct yourselves otherwise than you did, and lead a new life. But how has the new birth taken place? After this manner: God lets the Word—the Gospel—go forth, and the seed falls in the hearts of men, and wherever it fastens on the heart the Holy Spirit is present, and makes a new man; then the man becomes another, of other thoughts, of other words and works. Thus you are entirely changed. All that you before avoided you now seek out, and what you before sought, you now flee. Therefore it is indeed a wonderful birth, and of extraordinary seed.

Almighty God, Thy Word is cast
Like seed into the ground;
Now let the dew of heaven descend,
And righteous fruits abound.

Let not the foe of Christ and man
This holy seed remove;
But give it root in every heart,
To bring forth fruits of love.

June 20

> For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the Word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you. *I Pet. i. 24, 25.*

* * *

What is flesh and blood is corruptible, like the grass which is yet green, so that it blooms; so whatever is rich, strong, wise, and fair, and thus is flourishing (which all belongs to the bloom), yet you observe its bloom wither; what was young and vigorous will become old and ugly; what is rich will become poor, and the like. And all must fall by the Word of God. But this seed cannot perish. Peter concludes: *And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.* As though he would say, ye are not to look far in order to reach the Word of God; you have it before your eyes; the Word is that which we preach, therewith may you subdue all evil lusts. You are not to seek it from afar; you have nothing more to do than fully to apprehend it when it is preached. As when I hear that Jesus Christ died to take away my sins, and has purchased heaven for me, and bestows upon me all that He has, then I hear the Gospel. This truth no creature can overthrow, the clearest reasoning avails nothing against it; and if I, too, would strike the devil while I am in his jaws, I must abide fast by the Word. Therefore he well says, you must look for no other Gospel than that which we have preached to you.

> To us the sacred Word apply
> With sovereign power and energy;
> And may we, in Thy faith and fear,
> Reduce to practice what we hear.

June 21

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings. *I Pet. ii. 1.*

* * *

Here he begins to show what the characteristic and fruit of a Christian life should be. For we have said often enough that a Christian life consists in two things: faith toward God and love toward our neighbor. Besides, although Christian faith has been given us, yet as long as we live many evil lusts remain in the flesh, since every saint must be in the flesh, but what is in the flesh cannot be entirely pure. Therefore St. Peter says, be ye armed, that ye may guard yourselves against the sins which still cleave to you, and strive continually against them. For the worst enemies that we have hide themselves in our bosoms, and in our very flesh and blood, wake, sleep, and live with us, like a wicked spirit which we have brought home with us and cannot send off. Wherefore, since through faith Jesus Christ is entirely yours, and you have obtained salvation and all His blessings, let it be your aim henceforth to lay aside all wickedness, or all that is evil, and all guile, so that no one act toward another deceitfully or falsely. We Christians should not act with deceit, but uprightly and with pure hearts, toward men as toward God, fairly and justly. Furthermore, St. Peter says that we should lay aside hatred and evil speaking. Here he fitly takes up the common vices among men, in their intercourse with one another. This evil speaking is exceedingly common and injurious, is soon done, insomuch that none of us is aware of it. Therefore he says, be on your guard, if you already have a Christian spirit, that you may know what are the fruits of this spirit.

From dark temptation's power,
From Satan's wiles defend;
Deliver in the evil hour,
And guide us to the end.

June 22

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby. *I Pet. ii. 2.*

* * *

Here he institutes a comparison, and would say: Ye are like those newborn babes who seek nothing but the milk; like them, striving for the breasts and milk, so be ye also eager for the Word; endeavor for it, have an appetite for it, that ye may receive the intelligible, sincere milk. These words are, indeed, figurative; for he did not mean literal milk, or literal drinking, as he does not speak of a literal birth. But he speaks of another milk which belongs to the mind, which is spiritual, which is procured by the soul, which the heart must draw in. It must be, moreover, sincere (or unfalsified), not as the custom is, to sell false wares; since there is truly strong obligation, and great necessity, that to the newborn and young Christian, the milk should be given pure and not corrupted. But this milk is nothing but the Gospel, which is also the same with seed, whereby we are conceived and born, as we have heard above. Yet it is also the food which nourishes us when we arrive at maturity; it is also the harness wherewith we equip and clothe ourselves—yea, it is all these in common. But whatever is appended to it is human doctrine, whereby the Word of God is falsified; therefore the holy Spirit would have it so that every Christian shall see to it, what he drinks, and shall himself learn to decide in regard to all doctrines.

Lord, open Thou my heart to hear,
And by Thy Word to me draw near,
Let me Thy Word still pure retain,
Let me Thy child and heir remain.

Thy Word doth move the inmost heart,
Thy Word doth perfect health impart,
Thy Word my soul with joy doth bless,
Thy Word brings peace and blessedness.

June 23

If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.
I Pet. ii. 3.

* * *

It is not enough that we should hear the Gospel once; we must ever be anxious for it, that we may grow. After faith has become strong, we may provide and eat each kind of food. But to those who have not heard the Gospel, this is not said; they know neither what is milk or what is wine. Therefore he adds, if ye have besides tasted that the Lord is gracious; as though he had said, Whoever has not tasted it, to him it is not a thing of the heart, to him it is not sweet; but they who have tried it, who grow by the food and by the Word, to them it tastes pleasant and is sweet. But it is said to be tasted, when I believe with my heart that Christ has given Himself for me, and has become my own, and my sin and misery are His, and His life also is mine. When this reaches my heart, then it tastes; for how can I but receive joy and gladness therefrom? I am heartily glad, as though some good friend should bestow on me a hundred dollars. But that hardened class who live in their own holiness, build on their own works, and feel not their sin and misery, they taste this not. Whoever sits at table and is hungry, he relishes all readily; but he who is previously full, relishes nothing but only murmurs at the most excellent food. Therefore the Apostle says, if ye have besides tasted that the Lord is gracious. But it as though he said, If ye have not tasted it, then I preach to you in vain.

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

June 24

To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. *I Pet. ii. 4.*

* * *

To whom coming, as unto a living stone. Here he falls back again upon the Scripture, and quotes the prophet Isaiah, where he also says, chapter 28: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone," etc. This passage Paul has also quoted, and it is an important passage of Scripture, for Christ is the precious headstone which God has laid, on which we must be built. Christ, the living stone, bears up the whole building; and it is called the building, in order that we, bound one to another, may set our confidence and security on Him. *Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.* Here he brings forward a passage of the prophet David, in *(Ps. cxviii.)*: "The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes." So also Peter, in (*Acts iv.*), where he says: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders." You are builders, he says: for they taught the people, went about with great speeches, laid down many laws, but made mere work-saints and hypocrites. Therefore Peter says, This is the corner stone which indeed was rejected of men, whereon you must be built by faith. This is now wonderful in our eyes, as the prophet says; it seems strange to us, and where the Spirit does not teach it, it is utterly incomprehensible. Therefore he says, in God's eyes the stone is elect, and an extremely precious stone; it is of great importance also that it takes away death, satisfies for sin, and rescues from hell, besides that it freely bestows heaven.

Let every tribe and every tongue
That bound creation's call,
Now shout in universal song,
The crowned Lord of all!

June 25

> Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. *I Pet. ii. 5.*

* * *

How can we build ourselves up? By the Gospel and that which is preached. The builders are the preachers; the Christians who hear the Gospel are they who are built, and the stones which are to be fitted on this corner stone; so that we are to repose our confidence on Him, and let our hearts stand and rest upon Him. The house of stone or wood is not His house: He will have a spiritual house, that is, the Christian congregation. Those alone are the holy and spiritual priesthood, who are true Christians and built upon this stone. Christ has been anointed the high and most exalted priest by God Himself; has also sacrificed His own body for us, which is the office of the high priest; besides, He prayed on the cross for us. He has also preached the Gospel, and taught all men to know God and Himself. As to spiritual offerings, it is not necessary that we should present them to the Pope; neither is sacrifice such as it was in the Old Testament, when men had to tithe. These sacrifices and priesthood have now ceased, and all has become new and spiritual. The priest is Christ; and we all, since He has sacrificed His own body, must offer up ourselves. St. Peter says that we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Since Christ is the corner stone whereon we are laid, it must be only through Him that we are to treat with God, for God does not look upon my cross, even though I torture myself to death, but He looks upon Christ through whom my works are acceptable before God.

> Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,
> My beauty are, my glorious dress,
> 'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
> With joy shall I lift up my head.

June 26

> Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. *I Pet. ii. 6.*

* * *

I have before said that St. Peter has enriched and fortified his Epistle well with Scripture, just as all preachers should do, in order that their foundation may rest entirely on the Word of God. Here also he introduces four or five texts, one upon another. The first he has taken from the prophet Isaiah, word for word, that Christ is a precious corner stone or foundation, and is the very passage which we have just treated of and somewhat explained. It is truly an eminent proof text of the doctrine of faith, which is to be laid down as a foundation when we are to preach in a place where Christ has not been preached before. For it must be confessed that Christ is the stone on which faith should be built and should stand. But why does the prophet call Him a foundation stone? For this reason: that no man can build a house except he lay one stone first as a foundation, for the other stones in the building cannot stand except on the foundation stone. So we must all of us rest on Christ, and confess him as a foundation stone. Therefore we are not to pride ourselves that the stone must receive something from us, but we must receive blessings from it alone; for we do not bear it up, but it bears us up, and upon Him lies sin, death, hell, and all that we have to bear. So that all this—and whatever jars us—cannot injure us if we have been placed on this foundation.

Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Thy Law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone:
Thou must save, and Thou alone.

June 27

Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner. *I Pet. ii. 7.*

* * *

Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious. This exceedingly precious stone, says Peter, is indeed, to some, precious and honorable. But on the other hand, it is also to many not precious, but despised, and a stone of stumbling. How is this? The Scripture ascribes to it a two-fold aspect, inasmuch as there are some that believe thereon, and, on the other hand, many who do not believe thereon. To them who believe He is precious; so that my heart must be glad if I repose my confidence and trust upon Him. Therefore he says: To you that believe He is precious; that is, you are greatly dependent upon Him; for although He in Himself is precious and excellent, yet this may be of no service or help to me. Therefore He must be precious to us for this reason, because He gives us so many precious blessings; as an excellently precious stone, which does not retain its virtue in itself, but breaks forth and imparts all its powers, so that I have all that it is. Now God pronounces the sentence, that they who rest thereon, without works, come to be justified through faith alone.

O Christ, our true and only Light,
Enlighten those who sit in night;
Let those afar now hear Thy voice,
And in Thy fold with us rejoice.

June 28

> And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. *I Pet. ii. 8.*

* * *

But the unbelieving hold Him not as such a precious stone, but reject Him and stumble upon Him, because He is not pleasing to them, but obnoxious and hateful, although He is yet delightful in Himself. These are not only the great, openly avowed sinners, but much more those great saints who rest on their free-will, on their own works and righteousness, who must stumble on this stone and run upon it. That is the stumbling and the vexation whereof Scripture has much to say. Thus the Jews stumble to this day against this stone, and this will not cease until the last day shall come; then shall this stone fall upon all the unbelieving and grind them to powder. Wherefore, although Christ is such an elect, precious stone, He must yet be called a stone of offense and stumbling, by no fault of His. And just as the Jews did, we continue to do at the present day; for as they gloried in the name of God, that they were God's people, so it is the case now, that men, under the name of Christ and the Christian Church, deny Christ, and reject the precious stone.

O make the deaf to hear Thy Word,
And teach the dumb to speak, dear Lord,
Who dare not yet the faith avow,
Though secretly they hold it now.

June 29

> But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. *I Pet. ii. 9.*

* * *

There he gives Christians a true title, and has quoted this passage from Deut. vii. where Moses says to the Jews: Ye are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord your God has chosen you as His peculiar people out of all the nations that are on the earth. Priests and kings are all spiritual names, as Christians, saints, the Church. And just as you are not called Christian because you have much gold or wealth, but because you are built upon this stone and believe on Christ, so you are not called a priest because you wear a tonsure or long robe, but for this reason, that you come into God's presence. Likewise you are not a king because you wear a golden crown, and have many lands and people subject to you, but because you are lord over all things, death, sin, and hell. Therefore, it is as much as though he had said, Ye are Christians, when St. Peter says here, "ye are a royal priesthood," *That ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* This belongs to the office of a priest, that he be a messenger of God, and receive from God Himself the command to preach His Word. The praises, that is, the wonderful work that God has performed in you in bringing you out of darkness into light, you are to proclaim. For your whole duty is discharged in this, that you confess what God has done for you; and then let this be your chief aim, that you may make this known openly, and call every one to the light, whereto you have been called.

> O Lord, I sing with mouth and heart,
> Joy of my soul to Thee:
> To earth Thy knowledge I impart,
> As it is known to me.

June 30

Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. *I Pet. ii. 10.*

* * *

This passage is found written in the prophet Hosea, chapter 2, and St. Paul has also quoted it in Rom. ix: "I will call them My people, which were not My people." The import of all is this: Almighty God chose His people Israel as a peculiar people, and manifested His great power in their behalf, and gave them many prophets, and performed many wonderful works toward them, that He from that people might permit Christ to become man; and for the children's sake it has all taken place. Therefore they are called in Scripture the people of God. But the prophets have extended this further, and said that this election should be more comprehensive, and should even include the Gentiles. Therefore St. Peter says here, Ye are now the people of God, who once were not the people of God. Hence it is evident that he wrote the Epistle to the Gentiles and not to the Jews. Thereby he shows that the passage out of the prophet has been now fulfilled—that they are now a holy people—they have the property, priesthood, kingdom, and all which Christ has, if they believe.

Salvation unto us has come
By God's free grace and favor,
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never:
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is the Mediator.

July 1

> Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. *I Pet. ii. 11.*

* * *

This is the sense of the Apostle when he says, Dear brethren, I admonish you as strangers and as pilgrims. Since, then, you are one with Christ, form one household, and His goods are yours, your injury is His injury, and He takes as His own all that you possess; therefore you are to follow after Him, and conduct yourselves as those who are now no more citizens of the world. For your possessions lie not upon the earth, but in heaven; and though you have already lost all temporal goods, you still have Christ, who is more than all else. The devil is the prince of this world and rules it; his citizens are the people of this world; therefore, since you are not of the world, act as a stranger in an inn, who has not his possessions with him, but procures food, and gives his gold for it. For here it is only a sojourning, where we cannot tarry, but must travel farther. Therefore we should use worldly blessings no more than is needful for health and appetite, and therewith leave and go to another land. *Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.* What does St. Peter mean by these words? This is what he would say: You are not to imagine that you can succeeed by sports and sleep. Sin is indeed taken away by faith, but you have still the flesh, which is impulsive and inconsiderate; therefore take good care that you overcome it. A Christian life is nothing else but a conflict and encampment. We must therefore ever make resistance, and call upon God for help, and despond of all human powers.

O guide and lead me Lord,
While here below I wander;
Grant that I follow Thee,
My Guide and My Commander.
For if I lead myself,
I soon am led astray,
But if Thou leadest me,
I do my duty aye.

July 2

> Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. *I Pet. ii. 12.*

* * *

And lead an honest life, that those who have slandered you, as evil-doers, may see your good works and praise God. Mark now what an excellent order St. Peter has observed. He has already taught us what we should do in order to subdue the flesh with all its lusts. Now he teaches us again why this should be. Why should I subdue my flesh? That I may be saved? No, but that I may lead an honest life before the world. For this honest life does not justify us, but we must first be justified and believe before we attempt to lead an honest (pious) life. But as to outward conduct, this I am not to direct to my own profit, but that the unbelieving may thereby be reformed and attracted, that they through us may come to Christ; which is a true mark of love, though they slander and asperse us, and hold us as the worst wretches. St. Peter says: You must endure to have men asperse you as evil-doers, and for this reason you are to lead such a life that you shall do no man injury, and in this manner you shall bring about their reformation. *That . . . they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.* That is, you must endure that men reproach you till all shall be set forth and revealed, so that it shall be seen how unjust they have been toward you, and that they must glorify God on your account.

And let me with all men,
As far as in me lieth,
In peace and friendship live;
And if Thy gift supplieth
Me wealth and honor fair,
Then this refuse me not,
That naught be mingled there
Of goods unjustly got.

July 3

> Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. *I Pet. ii. 13, 14.* * * *

In such a beautiful order does St. Peter proceed, and teaches us how we should conduct ourselves in all things. Hitherto he has spoken in a general manner of the conduct that belongs to every condition. Now he begins to teach how we should act toward civil magistracy. For since he had said enough as to the first matter, of our duty to God and ourselves, he now adds how we are to conduct ourselves toward all men. And now he would say, in the first place, and before all else, since you have done all that was necessary that you might attain to a true faith and hold your body in subjection, let this now be your first business, to obey the magistracy. *For the Lord's sake.* We are not bound to obedience to the sovereign power for its own sake, he says, but for God's sake, whose children we are; and we should be drawn to this, not that we may thereby acquire a merit, for what I do for God's sake, I must freely do as an act of service; moreover, I would do from mere cheerfulness what His heart desires. But why should we be obedient to the magistracy for God's sake? Because it is God's will that evil-doers should be punished, and those that do well should be protected, that there may be concord in the world. Wherefore he says: *For the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.* The just should have the honor of it when they exalt and crown worldly magistracy insomuch that others may take example from them.

And grant me, Lord, to do,
With ready heart and willing,
Whate'er Thou shalt command:
My calling here fulfilling;
To do it when I ought,
With all my strength; and bless
The work I thus have wrought,
For Thou must give success.

July 4

For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. *I Pet. ii. 15.*

* * *

In these words St. Peter silences those vain babblers who glory in their Christian name, and prevents them from coming forward and saying, Since faith is sufficient for a Christian, and works do not justify, what is then the necessity of being subject to the civil power, and paying tribute and taxes? And he tells them thus, that although we have no need of it, we ought readily to do it to please God, so that the mouth of those enemies of God who asperse us may be stopped, and they be able to bring up nothing against us, and be compelled to say that we are honest, obedient people. So we read of many saints, that they are summoned to war under heathen rulers and slew the enemy, yet were subject and obedient (to those that summoned them), as we Christians are bound to be to the magistrates.

O teach me, Lord, to love Thee truly
With soul and body, head and heart,
And grant me grace that I may duly
Practice fore'er love's sacred art;
Grant that my every thought may be
Directed e'er to Thee.

July 5

As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. *I Pet. ii. 16.*

* * *

This is said especially for us who have heard of Christian freedom that we may not go on and abuse this freedom; that is to say, under the name and show of Christian freedom do all that we lust after, so that from this freedom shall spring up a shamelessness and carnal recklessness, as we see even now taken place, and had begun even in the Apostle's times. We have now again, through the grace of God, come to the knowledge of the truth; our conscience is enlightened and has become free from human ordinances and from all the control which they (the popes) have had over us, so that we are no longer obliged to do what they have commanded under peril of our salvation. To this freedom we must now hold fast and never suffer ourselves to be robbed of it; but for this very reason we should be carefully on our guard not to make this freedom a cloak of our shame. Though we are free from all laws, we must yet have respect to weak and ignorant Christians, since this is a work of love. Therefore let him who would glory in his freedom, do first what a Christian should do: let him first do good to his neighbor, and thereafter make use of his freedom in such a way as this. When the pope, or even any one, imposes his authority upon him, and would force him to obey it, let him say: My good fellow, Pope, I will not do it, for this reason, because you choose to make a command of it, and invade my freedom. For we are to live in freedom as the servants of God, not as servants of man. Yet in case any one desires that of me in which I can be of service to him, I will cheerfully do it out of good will, for the sake of brotherly love, and because God also requires that I should do good to my neighbor.

Create in me a new heart, Lord,
That gladly I obey Thy Word,
And naught but what Thou wilt, desire;
With such new life my soul inspire.

July 6

Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. *I Pet. ii. 17a.*

* * *

This is not a command, but a faithful admonition. We are each of us assuredly under obligation, although we are free; for this freedom does not extend to evil-doing, but merely to well-doing. Now, we have repeatedly said that every Christian, through faith, attains to all that Christ has Himself, and is, moreover, His brother. Therefore, as I give all honor to the Lord Christ, so also should I do toward my neighbor. This consists, not merely in outward behavior, that I should bow to him, and things of that sort, but much more: that inwardly in my heart I should highly regard him, as I also highly regard Christ. We are the temple of God; as St. Paul says *(I Cor. iii.)*, for the Spirit of God dwelleth in us. If now we bend the knee before a place of worship, or a picture of the holy cross, should we not do it far more before a living temple of God? So St. Paul teaches us, also, in Romans xii, that each should esteem the other better than himself, so that each should place himself below the other, and give him the preference. The gifts of God are manifold and various, so that one is in a more exalted position than another; but no one knows who is most exalted in the sight of God, for he may easily raise hereafter to the highest place one who here occupies the meanest position. Therefore should every one, however high he be exalted, humble himself and honor his neighbor.

Lord, all our trespasses forgive,
That they our hearts no more may grieve,
As we forgive their trespasses
Who unto us have done amiss;
Thus let us dwell in charity,
And serve each other willingly.

July 7

Fear God. Honor the king. *I Pet. ii. 17b.*

* * *

He says not that we are to have great regard of lords and kings, but still that we are to honor them, although they are heathen, as Christ also did, and those prophets who fell at the feet of the King of Babylon. To the power we are to be subject, and are to do what it bids, while it does not bind the conscience and only forbids in respect to outward things, even though it should proceed tyrannically toward us; for "if any one will take away thy coat, let him take thy cloak also." But if it invade the spiritual domain and constrain the conscience over which God only must preside and rule, we certainly should not obey it. Temporal authority and government extend no further than to matters which are external and respect the body. Therefore, whenever an emperor or a prince asks me what my faith is, I shall tell him, not because he commands it, but because I am under obligation to confess my faith publicly before every man. But in case he should go further, and command me that I should believe thus or so, then I shall tell him: "My good sir, do you attend to your civil government; you have no authority to intrude on God's domain, wherefore I certainly shall not obey you." St. Peter calls civil magistracy only a human ordinance. So that they (the magistracy) have no power to step into God's ordinances and to make laws against faith.

Give us this day our daily bread
And all that for this life we need;
From war and strife be our defense,
From famine and from pestilence,
That we may live in godly peace,
Unvexed by cares and avarice.

July 8

> Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. *I Pet. ii. 18.*

* * *

St. Peter has thus far taught us how we should be subject to the civil power, and give it honor. But now he proceeds and speaks of such power as does not extend itself over a community, but only over individuals. Here he first teaches how domestic servants should conduct themselves towards their masters, and this is the substance of it: Household servants are just as really Christians as any other class, if, like others, they have the Word, faith, baptism, and all such blessings; so that, before God, they are just as great and high as others. But, as to their outward state and before the world, there is a difference, since they occupy a lower station, and must serve others. Wherefore, since they are called into this state by God, they should let it be their business to be subject to their masters, and have respect and esteem for them. This is the will of God, and therefore it should cheerfully be done. Of this you may be certain and assured, that it pleases God and is acceptable to Him, when you do this in faith. Wherefore, since these are the best works which you can do, you are not to run far after others. What your master or mistress commands you, that God himself has commanded you. It is not a human command, although it is made by man. So that you are not to scruple as to the master you have, be he good or bad, kind or irritable and froward: but think thus, let the master be as he will, I will serve him, and do it to honor God, since He requires it of me, and since my Master, Christ, became a servant for my sake.

> For all are brethren, far and wide,
> Since Thou, O Lord, for all hast died:
> Then teach us, whatsoe'er betide,
> To love them all in Thee.

July 9

For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. *I Pet. ii. 19, 20.*

* * *

Here St. Peter speaks particularly of servants according to the circumstances of those times, when they were held as property, such as are to be found still in some places, and are exchanged like cattle, who are ill-treated and beaten of their masters; and the masters had such license that they were not punished although they put their servants to death. Wherefore it became necessary that the Apostles should carefully admonish and comfort such servants, that they might serve their hard masters, and endure it, though suffering and injustice were imposed upon them. Whoever is a Christian must also bear a cross; and the more you suffer wrongfully, the better it is for you; wherefore you should receive such a cross from God cheerfully, and thank Him for it. This is the right kind of suffering, that is well-pleasing to God. For what a thing would it be, that you should be cruelly beaten and had well deserved it, yet would glory in your cross? Therefore St. Peter says: When you suffer and are patient for well-doing, this is well-pleasing with God, that is to say, acceptable and exceedingly grateful in the sight of God, and a real service of God. Observe, here are those truly precious good works described, which we are to do; and we like fools have trodden this doctrine under foot, and have invented and devised other works; so that we should lift up our hands, thank God, and rejoice that we at length have knowledge of what are truly good works.

Teach us the lesson Thou hast taught,
To feel for those Thy blood hath bought;
That every word, and deed, and thought
May work a work for Thee.

July 10

> For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps. *I Pet. ii. 21.*

* * *

Thus it is, as we have said, that the servant should resolve in his heart and be induced cheerfully to do and suffer what is required for him. Hence they are to reason thus: since my Master has thus become my servant—a thing to which He was not obliged—and has given up body and life for me, why should not I serve Him in return? He was perfectly holy and without sin, yet has He so greatly humbled Himself, and has shed His blood for me, and has died that He might take away my sin. How then shall not I also endure somewhat if it pleases Him? Whoever reflects on this must be a stone if it does not move him; for when the Master goes forward and steps in the mire, the servant should cheerfully follow Him. Therefore St. Peter says, *Hereunto were ye called.* Whereto? That ye should suffer wrongfully like Christ. As though He would say, if you will follow after Christ you must not dispute and complain greatly, though you are unjustly treated, but endure the same and count it for the best, since Christ has suffered all without guilt of his own. He did not even defend His integrity when He stood before the judges. So that you are to neglect this right, and only say, *Deo gratias,* for this am I called that I should endure injustice; for what should I complain of when my Master did not complain?

Though a heavy cross I'm bearing,
And my heart feels the smart,
Shall I be despairing?
God can help me who doth send it,
He doth know all my woe
And how best to end it.

July 11

> Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, he threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. *I Pet. ii. 22, 23.*

* * *

Here St. Peter has quoted some words from the prophet Isaiah, namely: "He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth;" also, "With His stripes we are healed." Christ was so pure that not an evil word was ever on His tongue. He deserved that all should fall at His feet, and bear Him in their hands. Although He has power and the right to avenge Himself, He yet permitted Himself to be derided, insulted, reviled, and besides all, put to death, and never opened His mouth. Why then should you not endure it also, when you are nothing but sin? You ought to praise and thank God that you are counted worthy of this—that you should be like Christ; and not murmur nor be impatient though you be made to suffer, since the Master did not revile nor threaten in return, but even prayed for His enemies.

Dear Refuge of my weary soul,
On Thee, when sorrows rise,
On Thee, when waves of trouble roll,
My fainting hope relies.

July 12

> Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. *I Pet. ii. 24.*

* * *

But perhaps you say, "How? Am I then to give that which is due to those who treat me unjustly, and say of them, they have done well?" Answer. No, but this is what you are to say: I will from my heart cheerfully suffer it, although I have not deserved it, and you do me injustice for my Master's sake, who also has endured injustice for me. You are to commit it to God, who is a righteous judge, and will richly reward it, just as Christ committed it to His heavenly Father. *Who His own self bare our sins in His own body;* that is, He has not suffered for Himself, but for our welfare. We who have crucified Him by our sins, are far from that condition ourselves. Wherefore, if you are a pious Christian, you are to follow after your Master, and mourn for those who make you suffer, and even pray for them, that God will not punish them; for they do far more injury to their own souls than to your body. If you lay this to heart, you shall easily forget your suffering, and suffer cheerfully. For we are to consider that we were once in such a Christless state as those, but have now, through Christ been converted.

To Thee I tell each rising grief,
For Thou alone canst heal;
Thy Word can bring a sweet relief
For every pain I feel.

July 13

For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. *I Pet. ii. 25.*

* * *

This extract text is a passage from the prophet Isaiah, who speaks after this manner: "We, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." But now have we obtained a Shepherd, says St. Peter. The Son of God has come for our sake, that He might be our Shepherd and Bishop; He gives us His Spirit, feeds us, and leads us by His Word, so that we now know how we are helped. Therefore, when you confess that through Him your sins have been taken away, then you become His sheep, and He becomes your herdsman. Just as He is Thy Bishop, so art Thou His soul. This is, then, the comfort which all Christians have. Thus we have two chapters in this epistle, wherein St. Peter has in the first place taught the true faith, then the true works of love, and has spoken of two kinds of work. First, that we all generally should practice toward civil government, then how domestics should conduct themselves toward their masters. And what St. Peter here says of servants, extends, also, to all other persons, namely artisans, day-laborers, and all kinds of hired servants.

My God and Shield, now let Thy power
Be unto me a mighty tower,
Whence bravely I defend me
Against the foes that round me close;
O Lord, assistance lend me!

July 14

> Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the Word, they also may without the Word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. *I Pet. iii. 1, 2.*

* * *

Here St. Peter speaks especially of wives, who at that time had heathen and unbelieving husbands. And on the other hand, he speaks of believing husbands who had heathen wives; for it often occurred, while the Apostles preached the Gospel among the heathen, that one was a Christian and the other not. If it *then* was commanded that the wife should be subject to the husband, how much more must it be so ordered now. Therefore it is the woman's duty, St. Peter would say, to be subject to her husband, although he is a heathen and unbeliever; and he gives the reason why this should be so. *They also may without the Word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.* When a man sees that his wife proceeds and conducts herself with such propriety, then he is drawn toward obedience, and holds the state of a Christian to be one that is truly blessed. And although it is not directed to women to preach, yet should they so conduct themselves in their demeanor and conversation that they may thereby attract their husbands toward obedience. It is a high noble blessing which a wife may have when she so conducts herself as to be subject to her husband, inasmuch as she is saved, and her works please God.

With Thee, Lord, would I cast my lot;
My God, my God, forsake me not,
For, Lord, I am commending
My soul to Thee; deliver me
Now and when life is ending.

July 15

> Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. *1 Pet. iii. 3, 4.*

* * *

Here possibly some one might ask whether that which St. Peter here says of ornament is commanded or not. We read of Esther, that she wore a golden crown and precious ornaments, decking herself as a queen. So also of Judith. But near by it is recorded, that she despised the ornament and wore it from necessity. So that we say this much, that a woman should be so disposed as not to care for this adorning. But in such a way should she be adorned, as St. Peter here says, as to be inwardly attired in a meek and quiet spirit. Where the wife is of such a disposition, she will so much the more please her husband. Therefore they are to take this into consideration (says St. Peter), that they adorn the inward man, where there is to be a quiet spirit, one that cannot be ruffled; not only that they do not run into excess, so that they may be kept from confusion and shame, but his meaning is, that they should beware that the soul remain unruffled, and in the true faith, and that this be not forsaken. Such a heart is a precious thing in the sight of God. She is truly and nobly adorned in the sight of God, who goes forth with a meek and quiet spirit; and since God Himself accounts it precious, it must be a noble thing. A Christian soul has all that Christ has, for faith, as we have said, brings us all the blessings of Christ in common. This is a great and precious treasure, and such an ornament as none can sufficiently prize. God Himself makes much account of it.

Faith, and hope, and charity,
Graciously, O Father, give me;
Be my Guardian constantly,
That no devil e'er may grieve me,
Grant me humbleness, and gladness,
Peace, and patience, in my sadness.

July 16

> For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. *I Pet. iii. 5, 6.*

* * *

As these women adorned themselves he would say, so do ye also, as Sarah was obedient to her husband Abraham, and called him her lord. So Scripture speaks *(Gen. xviii.)* where the angel came to Abraham and said, "Lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son"; then she laughed and spoke thus: Now that I am old, and my lord is old also, shall I yet have pleasure? This passage St. Peter has justly noticed and adduced in this place; for she would not have called Abraham thus her lord if she had not been subject to him and had him before her eyes. *Whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.* This is what he means. It is usually the nature of women to be troubled and frightened about everything, since they are so much occupied with charms and superstition, while one teaches the other, so that it is not to be told what illusions they have. This should not be the case with a Christian woman, but she should go forward securely, and not be so superstitious, and run about here and there and pronounce here a blessing, there a blessing. Whatever may happen, she should let God direct; and she is to remember it cannot go ill with her, for as long as she knows her condition, that her state is pleasing to God, what will she then have to fear? Though your child die, though you are sick, it is well if it pleases God; if you are in a state which pleases God, what better can you desire? This, then, is what is preached to wives. Now follows the duty of husbands.

> O blest the house, whate'er befall,
> Where Jesus Christ is all in all;
> Yea, if He were not dwelling there,
> How poor, and dark, and void it were!

July 17

> Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. *I Pet. iii. 7.*

* * *

The woman is also God's instrument or vessel, he says, for God uses her to this end, that she may bear children, give them birth and nourishment, and watch over them, and rule the household. Such work is the wife to do. So that she is God's instrument and vessel, which He has created and instructed to this end. For this reason is the husband to respect his wife. Therefore St. Peter says, *Ye husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge,* not that you are to rule over them with a headstrong will. They are, indeed, to obey the law of the husband; what he bids and commands, that is to be done; but he is also to see to it that he walks soberly and according to reason with his wife, so as to give her that respect and honor which belongs to her as God's weaker vessel. The husband is also God's instrument, but he is stronger, while the wife is weaker bodily, as well as timid and more easily dispirited; therefore you are so to conduct yourself and walk in respect to her, that she may be able to bear it. *As being heirs together of the grace of life.* The husband is not to dwell on this, that the wife is weak and fragile, but on this, that she is also baptized, and has the same that he has—all blessings in Christ. *That your prayers be not hindered.* This is his meaning: If you do not act in accordance with reason, but will find fault, and murmur, and proceed arbitrarily, and in this give occasion for error, so that neither can overlook another's fault, and take all for the best, then will you be unable to pray, and say, "Father, forgive us our sins as we forgive."

Happy the man who feareth God,
Whose feet His holy ways have trod;
Thine own good hand shall nourish thee,
And well and happy shalt thou be.

July 18

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous. *I Pet. iii. 8.*

* * *

To be compassionate is that one should make himself a sharer with another, and have a heart to feel his neighbor's necessity. When misfortune overtakes him you are not to think: Ah! it is right, it is no more than he should have, he has well deserved it. Where there is love, it identifies itself with its neighbor; and when it goes ill with him, the heart feels it as though it were its own experience. But to be brotherly (affectionate as brethren) is this much, that one should regard another as his brother. So ought we, as Christians, to act; for we are all brethren by baptism. This is what St. Peter would say, that we should conduct ourselves one toward another like those that are truly friends by blood, as with them the whole heart is moved, the life, the pulse, and all the powers; so here, also, the course should be pitiful, the heart should be thoroughly undivided. Courteous is that we lead outwardly a gentle, pleasing, lovely behavior—not merely that we should sympathize one with another, as a father and mother for their child—but also that we should walk in love and gentleness one with another. There are some men rough and knotty, like a tree full of knots, so uncivil that no one will readily have anything to do with them. But there are gentle people, who interpret all for the best, and are not suspicious, do not permit themselves to be soon irritated, and can put the best construction on an act. This virtue St. Paul names Chrestotes, as it is often praised by him.

Ever be near our side,
Our Shepherd and our Guide,
Our Staff and Song;
Jesus, Thou Christ of God,
By Thine enduring Word,
Lead us where Thou hast trod,
Make our faith strong.

July 19

> Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. *I Pet. iii. 9.*

* * *

This is a still further illustration of love, showing how we should act towards those that injure and persecute us. This is his meaning: If any one does you evil, do him good; if any one rails at and curses you, then you are to bless and wish him well; for this is an important part of love. O Lord God, what a rarity such Christians are! But why should we return good for evil? Because, says he: *Ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing,* so that you should suffer yourselves to be attracted toward it. In the Scriptures we Christians are called a people of blessing, or a blessed people. For thus said God to Abraham *(Gen. xii)*: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Since God has so richly shed down this blessing upon us, in that He takes away from us all the malediction and the curse which we have derived to ourselves from our first parents, as well as that which Moses suffered to go forth upon the disobedient, so that we are now filled with blessing, we ought so to conduct ourselves that it shall be said of us, That is a blessed people. So that this is what the Apostle here means. See, God has shown you His favor, and has taken away from you the curse, and the reviling wherewith you have dishonored Him; He neither imputes nor punishes, but has bestowed upon you such rich grace and blessing, while you were only worthy of all malediction. Do you also as has been done toward you; curse not, rail not, do well, speak well, even though you are treated ill.

Thou art our holy Lord,
O all-subduing Word,
Healer of strife:
Thou didst Thyself abase,
That from sin's deep disgrace
Thou mightest save our race,
And give us life.

July 20

> For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. *I Pet. iii. 10.*

* * *

That is, whoever would have pleasure and joy in life, and would not die before time, but see good days, so that it shall go well with him, let him keep his tongue that it speak not evil, not only in respect to his friends, for that is a small virtue and a thing which even the wickedest of all may do, even snakes and vipers, but also, he says, maintain a kind spirit, and keep your tongue silent even against your enemies, though you are even incited thereto, and though you have cause to rail and speak evil. Besides, keep your lips, he says, that they do not deceive. There are probably many who give good words, and say *good morning* to their neighbor, but they think in their heart, The devil take you. These are people who have not inherited the blessing; they are the evil fruit of an evil tree. Therefore St. Peter has introduced a passage which refers to works, even to their root, that is, what springs from within out of the heart.

O that the Lord would guide my ways,
To keep His statutes still!
O that my God would grant me grace
To know and do His will!

July 21

Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. *I Pet. iii. 11.*

* * *

The world considers this as satisfaction when one man does injustice to another that his head should be cut off. But this brings one no nearer to peace. No king, even, ever attained to peace before his enemies. But he who seeks after the true peace, and moreover would find it, let him restrain his tongue; let him turn away from evil and do good: this is a course different from that which the world pursues. To turn from evil and to do good is, that when a man hears evil words, he be able to overlook the wickedness and injustice. Seek thus after peace, so shall you find it; when your enemy has wasted his breath and done all that he can, if you hear him, but rail and rant not back, he must subdue himself by his own violence. For thus Christ also on the cross subdued his enemies, not by the sword or by violence. Therefore is it a saying, which should be written with gold, where it says: "Striking back again makes hatred, and whoever strikes back again is unjust." Thence it must follow that not to strike back again makes peace. But how can this be? It is not commonly done. Certainly it does not accord with human nature; but if you in this manner suffer unjustly and do not strike back again, but let the matter go, it shall come to pass as hereafter follows.

Order my footsteps by Thy Word,
And make my heart sincere;
Let sin have no dominion, Lord,
But keep my conscience clear.

July 22

> For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. *I Pet. iii. 12.*

* * *

If you do not revenge yourself and do not repay evil with evil, there is the Lord in heaven above who cannot tolerate wrongs; wherefore he that does not strike back must have his right. These He beholds; their prayer reaches His ear; He is our Protector and will not forget us; therefore, we cannot escape from His eyes. We should comfort ourselves with this thought. And so this should induce a Christian to endure all injustice with patience, and not return evil. If I properly reflect, I see that the soul which does me wrong must burn forever in hell-fire. Therefore a Christian heart should speak in this wise: Dear Father, since this man falls so sadly under Thy wrath and so miserably throws himself into hell-fire, I pray that Thou wouldest forgive him, and do to him even as Thou hast done toward me since Thou hast rescued me from condemnation. But how is this? Thus: While He graciously looks down upon the righteous, He also looks angrily at the wicked, wrinkles His brow and turns it in indignation upon them; since we know then that He looks upon us graciously and upon them with disfavor, we ought to suffer ourselves to pity and mourn for them, and pray for them.

O Father, God of love,
Hear now my supplication!
Lord Jesus, Son of God,
O grant me Thy salvation!
And Thou, O Holy Ghost,
Always abide with me,
That I may serve Thee here,
And there eternally!

July 23

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? *I Pet. iii. 13.*

* * *

If we follow after that which is good, that is, do not reward evil with evil, but are heartily kind and courteous, etc., then there is none that can injure us. For though our honor, life, and property should be taken away, we are still uninjured. Hence we have a blessing that is incomparable, one that none can take from us. Those who persecute us have nothing but prosperity on earth, but thereafter, eternal condemnation, while we have an eternal, incorruptible good, although we lose a small temporal blessing.

Whom should I give my heart's affection,
But Thee, who givest Thine to faith?
Thy fervent love is my protection:
Lord, Thou hast loved me unto death.
My heart with Thine shall ever be
One heart throughout eternity.

July 24

> But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. *I Pet. iii. 14.*

* * *

Blessed are you if you suffer for righteousness' sake. Not only, he says, can no one injure you if you suffer for God's sake, but blessed are you also, and you should rejoice that you are to suffer, as Christ also says in the fifth chapter of Matthew: "Blessed are ye, when man shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad." Whoever then apprehends this, that it is the Lord who speaks such things, and so tenderly speaks comfort to his heart, he stands well; but to whom this does not bring strength, but makes him sad and complaining, he may well remain unstrengthened. *Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.* Here St. Peter quotes a passage from Isaiah viii., where he says: "Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread." There we have a great support and reliance, whereon we may trust, assured that no one can injure us. Let the world terrify, defy, and threaten as long as it will, it must have an end, but our confidence and joy shall have no end; thus we shall have no fear on account of the world, but shall be courageous, while before God we shall humble ourselves and be afraid.

O God, forsake me not!
But lead, full of compassion,
With loving hands Thy child,
That I may gain salvation,
When here my course is run;
Be Thou my Light, my Lot,
My Staff, my Rock, my Shield,—
O God, forsake me not.

July 25

> But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. *I Pet. iii. 15.*

* * *

We must here acknowledge that St. Peter addressed these words to all Christians, clergy and laity, male and female, young and old, of whatever state or condition they may be. From thence it will follow that every Christian should know the ground and reason of his faith, and be able to maintain and defend it where it is necessary. *With meekness and fear.* That is, if you are examined and questioned of your faith, you should not answer with haughty words, and proceed in the matter with contempt and violence, as if you would tear up a tree by the roots, but with such fear and humility as if you stood before God's tribunal, and were there to give answer. You must stand in fear, and not rely on your own strength, but on the Word and promise of Christ *(Matt. x. 19, 20)*: "But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." It is right, when you are to answer, that you should prepare yourself well with passages out of Scripture; but beware that you do not insist thereon with a proud spirit, since God will even take the most forcible reply out of your mouth and memory, though you were previously prepared with all your replies. Therefore fear is proper.

O let me never speak
What bounds of truth exceedeth:
Grant that no idle word
From out my mouth proceedeth;
And grant when in my place
I must and ought to speak,
My words due power and grace,
Nor let me wound the weak.

July 26

> Having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. *I Pet. iii. 16.*

* * *

Having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. Of this St. Paul has already spoken above. We cannot disregard it. If we will follow the Gospel, then must we be despised and condemned by the world, so that men shall hold us as contemptible rabble. But let the devil and all the world rave and rage, let them abuse us as they will, yet they shall at last be made to understand, with shame, that they have injured and defamed us, when *that* day shall arrive—as St. Peter has said above—in which we shall be secure, and stand up with a good conscience. These are, in every respect, suitable and forcible replies, which can comfort us and make us courageous, and yet go on circumspectly, with fear.

And grant me, Lord, to do,
With ready heart and willing,
Whate'er Thou shalt command:
My calling here fulfilling;
To do it when I ought,
With all my strength; and bless
The work I thus have wrought,
For Thou must give success.

July 27

For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing. *I Pet. iii. 17.* * * *

It will not, then, be the case that they who shall reach heaven shall have prosperity on earth; as even those who do not arrive at heaven may not have prosperity. For that which God said to Adam is imposed on all men: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"; and to the woman: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children." Since, now, adversity is imposed in common upon us all, how much more must *we* bear the cross if we would attain to eternal life. Therefore he says, since God will have it so, it is better that you suffer for well-doing. They who suffer for evil-doing have an evil conscience, and have double punishment. But Christians have only the half of it. Outwardly, they have suffering; but inwardly, comfort. It is not the will of God that we seek out, and even invite, calamity. Go thou on in faith and love. If the cross comes, take it up; if it comes not, seek not for it. Therefore these modern spirits commit sin, in that they lash and beat themselves, or subject themselves to torture, and so would storm heaven. This has Paul also forbidden, in Colossians iii., where he speaks of such saints as walk in a self-chosen spirituality and humility, and spare not their body. We should also restrain the body that it do not become too wanton, yet not so as to destroy it; and we should submit to suffer if another sends suffering upon us, but not of our own choice fall therein. That is the meaning of "if it is God's will"—if He has appointed it—for then it is better; while you are also more happy and fortunate that you suffer for well-doing.

O God, forsake me not!
Lord, hear my supplication!
In every evil hour
Help me o'ercome temptation;
And when the Prince of hell
My conscience seeks to blot,
Be Thou not far from me—
O God, forsake me not.

July 28

> For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. *I Pet. iii. 18.*

* * *

There St. Peter presents us, once for all, the example of our Lord, and points us evermore to Christ's sufferings, that we all of us alike should follow His example, so that He need not present a particular exemplar for the estate of every individual. But more particularly, he says here, Christ has suffered once for us; that is, Christ has borne many sins upon Himself, but He has not done it in such a way as to die for every individual sin; but at once, for all together, has done enough to remove the sins of all who come to Him and believe on Him—who are now freed from death, even as He is free. *The Just for the Unjust, that He might bring us to God.* This is all said to teach the peculiar end of Christ's sufferings; namely, that He died—not for His own sake—but that He might present us to God. *Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.* The word flesh is common in Scripture, as is also the word spirit, and the Apostles usually present the two in contrast. The sense is this: that Christ, through His sufferings, is taken out of this life that consists in flesh and blood, as a man on earth who lives by flesh and blood—walks and stands, eats, drinks, sleeps, wakes, sees, hears, grasps, and feels—and in brief, whatever the body does while it is sensible. To all this Christ has died; so that this life has now ceased with Him, and He is now removed to another life and quickened after the Spirit, passed into a spiritual and supernatural life, so that He has no more a fleshly body, but a spiritual body.

Jesus, the Lord, the mighty God,
An all-sufficient ransom paid:
O matchless price! His precious blood
For vile, rebellious traitors shed.

July 29

> By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. *I Pet. iii. 19, 20.*

* * *

Thus St. Peter brings us into the Scriptures, that we may study therein; and gives us an illustration out of them, from the ark of Noah, and interprets this same figure. For it is pleasant to have one bring forward illustrations from such figures, as St. Paul also does when he is speaking, in Galatians iv., of the two sons of Abraham, and the two women; and Christ, in John v., of the serpent which Moses had erected in the wilderness. Such comparisons, when well drawn, are excellent; wherefore St. Peter introduces this here, that we may be able to comprehend faith under a pleasing image. But he would also tell us, that as it happened when Noah was preparing the ark, so it takes place now. As he took refuge in the ark which swam upon the waters, so it is to be observed, must you also be saved in baptism. Just as that water swallowed up all that was then living, of man and beast, so baptism also swallows up all that is of the flesh and corrupt nature, and makes spiritual men. But we rest in the ark, which means the Lord Christ, or the Christian Church, or the Gospel that Christ preached, or the body of Christ, on which we rest by faith, and are saved as Noah in the ark. You also perceive how the image comprises in brief what belongs to faith and to the cross, to life and death. Where there are only those that follow Christ, there is such a Christian Church, where all that springs from Adam, and whatever is evil, is removed.

> This flood, to cleanse sin's leprosy,
> Mere earthly water cannot be;
> But water and God's gracious Word
> Conjoined, this saving bath afford.

July 30

> The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ; Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him. *I Pet. iii. 21, 22.*

* * *

But you are saved and kept not by merely washing away the filth of the flesh, that the body be clean, as was the practice of the Jews; such purification has no further value. But the answer of a good conscience toward God, that is, that your conscience be rightfully at peace within you, that it stand in harmony with God, and can say: "He has promised me that He will fulfill for He cannot lie." Faith alone is the band whereby we shall be held.

Faith rests on the fact that Christ died, descended into hell, and has risen again from the dead. Had he continued subject to death, it would not have benefited us; but since He has risen and sits at the right hand of God, and permits this to be proclaimed to us so that we may believe on Him, we have a union with God and a sure promise whereby we shall be saved, as Noah was saved in the ark.

Thus Jesus His disciples sent—
Go, teach ye every nation,
That, lost in sin, they must repent,
And flee from condemnation;
He that believes and is baptized
Shall thereby have salvation,
A newborn man he is in Christ,
From death free and damnation,
He shall inherit heaven.

July 31

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin. *I Pet. iv. 1.*

* * *

St. Peter continues still in the same strain. Just as he hitherto has admonished us generally that we should suffer, if it be the will of God, and has set Christ before us as an example, so he now confirms it more broadly, and repeats it, saying: Since Christ, who is our Captain and Head, has suffered in the flesh and presented Himself as an example—besides that He has ransomed us from our sins—we also should imitate Him, and prepare ourselves, and put on the same armor. Therefore he says, "Arm yourselves with the same mind," that is, strengthen yourselves with the mind which you receive from Christ. In the same way, also, you are to understand that which follows in the passage before us. For whoever suffers in the flesh, says he, ceases from sin, and therefore the holy cross is profitable, since it requires you to mortify lust, envy and hate, and other wickedness.

I am trusting Thee for power,
Thine can never fail;
Words which Thou Thyself shalt give me
Must prevail.

I am trusting Thee for pardon,
At Thy feet I bow;
For Thy grace and tender mercy,
Trusting now.

August 1

> That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries. *I Pet. iv. 2, 3.*

* * *

We should henceforth, as long as we live, hold the flesh captive through the cross and by mortifications, so as to do that which pleases God, and not with the idea that we should or can deserve anything by it. He says, *not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God;* that is, we should not do that to which we might yet be tempted by others; for we are not to be conformed to this work, as Paul says *(Rom. xii. 1, 2)*. What the world demands of us we must refuse.

We have already gone too far, that before our believing we have so shamefully spent our life in accordance with the will of the Gentiles, or the lusts of men. Therefore as long as life continues we should see to it that we do that which is well-pleasing to God; for we have our enemy in our flesh, the one that is the real knave, not gross matter merely, but more particularly blindness of mind, which Paul calls carnal wisdom. Therefrom results such idolatry as is abominable.

What is the world to me!
My Jesus is my Treasure,
My Life, my Wealth, my All,
My Friend, my Love, my Pleasure,
My earthly Happiness
And Bliss eternally;
Once more, then, I would say,
What is the world to me!

August 2

> Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you; who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. For, for this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. *I Pet. iv. 4-6.*

* * *

The Apostle says: Ye have hitherto lived after the manner of the heathen; but since you have now forsaken it, it appears strange to men, and seems shameful and foolish. But let it seem strange to them; let them libel you. They shall yet be compelled to give an account. Wherefore leave it to Him that will judge righteously.

The Gospel is preached not only to the living, but was preached also to the dead, [these that are now dead] in order that they may be judged according to men in the flesh. We are not to be anxious as to how God will condemn the heathen who died many centuries ago, but only how He will judge those that are now living. The Gospel has been freely published and universally spread abroad, concealed neither from dead nor living, but so publicly that all creatures might hear it that have ears to hear. If, therefore, it is preached in such a manner, there will those be found who are condemned after the flesh, but live after the spirit. As to their outward being they are condemned, but inwardly, as respects the spirit, they are preserved in life.

Let thoughtless thousands choose the road
That leads the soul away from God;
This happiness, dear Lord, be mine,
To live and die entirely Thine.

Soon will the saints in glory meet,
Soon walk through every golden street,
And sing on every blissful plain,—
To live is Christ, to die is gain.

August 3

But the end of all things is at hand. *I Pet. iv. 7a.*

* * *

This is also a remarkable passage, for already one thousand nine hundred years have passed since then; yet he says that the end of all things is at hand; as John also declares in the First Epistle, ii. 18: "Little children, it is the last time!" By this we must firmly abide, that the apostle has truth with him. What he means here he explains himself in the Second Epistle, where he tells us why the time is said to be near, and says: "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." So that we must explain it in this manner, that it shall not be as long hereafter to the end of the world, as it has been from the beginning to the present time. And it is not to be expected that man should exist two or three thousand years after the birth of Christ, so that the end shall come before we look for it.

Lord, on that day, that wrathful day,
When man to judgment wakes from clay,
Be Thou the trembling sinner's stay,
Though heaven and earth shall pass away.

August 4

Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. *I Pet. iv. 7b, 8.*

* * *

Here you perceive the reason why we are to watch and be sober; namely, that we may be prepared to pray for ourselves and our neighbors. Also love cannot be fervent unless you keep the body in subjection. Here St. Peter has quoted a passage from the book of Proverbs x. 12: "Hate stirreth up strife, but love covereth the multitude of sins." And this is what St. Peter means: Subdue your flesh and lusts. Unless you do that, you will easily offend one another, and yet not easily be able to forgive one another. Take care, therefore, that you subdue the wicked lusts; you will then be able to show love one to another and to forgive: for love covereth sins. And love covers not only one, two, or three sins, but the multitude of sins. It cannot suffer and do too much: it covers up all. So Paul also speaks and teaches in accord with this passage *(I Cor. xiii. 7)*: "Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." It has respect to the best good of all.

Assist my soul, too apt to stray,
A stricter watch to keep;
And should I e'er forget Thy way,
Restore Thy wandering sheep.

August 5

> Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. *I Pet. iv. 9, 10.*

* * *

He is said to be hospitable who cheerfully acts the host. When the Apostles went abroad one with another and preached and sent their younger brethren here and there, it was necessary that one should lodge the other. How well would it be if, where one was weak he should be helped, and where one had fallen down he should be lifted up. St. Peter directs that this should take place without murmuring, and that no one should suffer it to seem too much for him.

This is also a work of love, that we minister to one another. Wherewith? With the gifts of God which every one has received. The Gospel directs that every one be the servant of the other, and besides, see to it that he abide in the gift which he has received and which God has bestowed upon him; that is, the state whereunto he has been called. Although you are a high and great lord, yet should you employ your power to this end, that you may therewith serve your neighbor. Thus should every one hold himself for a servant. God has not bestowed upon us all like grace; therefore should every one inquire to what he has been appointed, and what kind of gift has been bestowed upon him. When he discovers this, let him use it for the service of his neighbor.

And grant me, Lord, to do,
With ready heart and willing,
Whate'er Thou shalt command;
My calling here fulfilling;
To do it when I ought,
With all my strength; and bless
The work I thus have wrought,
For Thou must give success.

August 6

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. *I Pet. iv. 11a.*

* * *

That is, if any one has the grace that enables him to preach and teach, let him teach and preach. As also St. Paul says *(Rom. xii. 3-7)*: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching." For this reason has God distributed various gifts among men which should be employed to this intent alone, that one should minister therewith to another, especially those who are in authority, be it in preaching or some other ministry.

Now St. Peter says here: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." This point is worthy of special remark, that no one is to preach anything but what he is sure, is the Word of God.

O let me never speak
What bounds of truth exceedeth!
Grant that no idle word
From out my mouth proceedeth;
And grant, when in my place
I must and ought to speak,
My words due power and grace,
Nor let me wound the weak.

August 7

If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. *I Pet. iv. 11b.*

* * *

Whoever rules in the Christian Church and has an office or ministry for the care of souls, he is not to proceed as he may choose, and say, I am a sovereign lord, I must be obeyed; what I do shall remain established. God requires that we should do no otherwise than as He directs. So that since it is God's work and ordinance, let a bishop do nothing except he be sure that God sanctions it, that it is either God's Word or work. And besides, inasmuch as God will not permit that we should regard as a matter of sport what we do with the Christian Church, we must stand in such an assurance as this, that God speaks and works through us, and that our faith may also say, That which I have spoken and done, God also has spoken and done; on this I will even die. In that case, we may praise and thank God for His Word and work's sake, though we should be belied and held up for derision. Therefore it is a shameful and ruinous thing that in Christendom any one should govern in opposition to the Word and works of God. Therefore from necessity has St. Peter subjoined that in which he instructs how government should be ordered among Christian people.

Lord, I will tell, while I am living,
Thy goodness forth with every breath;
And greet each morning with thanksgiving
Until my heart is still in death,
Yea, when at last my lips grow cold,
Thy praise shall in my sighs be told.

August 8

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. *I Pet. iv. 12.*

* * *

St. Peter uses this expression in order to remind us of that concerning which the Holy Ghost speaks. For the Scripture is accustomed to speak of suffering as if it were a furnace full of fire and heat. St. Peter has spoken in the same manner in the first chapter of "the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire" *(I Pet. i. 7)*. This is St. Peter's conclusion, that we should not suffer ourselves to be surprised, or to think it strange and wonderful that the heat or fire should meet us, whereby we are tried, just as gold is when it is melted in the fire. Therefore, he says, are you tried; that is, God appoints for you no flame or heat (in other words, cross and suffering, which make you glow as in a furnace), except to try you, whether you rely on His Word. That is the reason why God imposes the cross on all believers, that they may taste and prove the power of God which through faith they have possessed.

My God desires the soul's salvation,
Me also He desires to save;
Therefore, with Christian resignation,
All earthly troubles I will brave.
His will be done eternally:
What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me.

August 9

> But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. *I Pet. iv. 13.*

* * *

Just as Christ has suffered, so you must expect to suffer and be tried. If you thus suffer, then you have therein fellowship with the Lord Christ.

If we would live with Him, we must also die with Him. *But rejoice.* Though you should be brought to torture and flames, you would still be happy. For though there be pain as to the body, there shall yet be a spiritual joy, inasmuch as you are to be happy forever. For this joy springs here from suffering and is everlasting. Yet whoever cannot bear his sufferings cheerfully, and is dissatisfied and chooses to contend with God, he shall endure, both here and hereafter, eternal torment and suffering. *When His glory shall be revealed.* Christ does not permit Himself as yet to be seen as a Lord, but is still a sharer with us in our labors. So far as He is Himself concerned, He is truly such, but we who are His members, are not lords yet. Still, we shall be lords, when His glory at the last day shall be revealed before all men, brighter than the sun.

O happy day, and yet far happier hour,
When wilt thou come at last?
When fearless to my Father's love and power,
Whose promise standeth fast,
My soul I gladly render,
For surely will His hand
Lead me, with guidance tender,
To heaven, my fatherland.

August 10

If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified. *I Pet. iv. 14.*

* * *

Christ is a hateful name with the world; whoever preaches of Him must endure to have the most esteemed on earth slander and revile His name. But this in our times is more strange and unseemly, that they who persecute us bear also the name of Christ. They say they are Christians and are baptized, yet, in fact, they renounce and persecute Christ. This is indeed a sad strife. For this reason we greatly need consolation, that we may abide firmly and remain cheerful. But how? Ye (he says) have within you a Spirit, that is, the Spirit of God and of glory, such as makes you glorious. Therefore it is not you who receive the reviling; it belongs to the Spirit, which is a Spirit of glory. Be not anxious; He will regard it and raise you to honor. This is the consolation which we as Christians have, that we may say: The Word is not mine, this faith is not mine; they are all the work of God. Whoever reviles me reviles God. Therefore, he says, be ye cheerful and happy, for that opposition is to the Spirit, which is not yours, but God's.

If dangers gather round,
Still keep me calm and fearless;
Help me to bear the cross;
When life is dark and cheerless;
Let me subdue my foe
By words and actions kind;
When counsel I would know,
Good counsel let me find.

August 11

> But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? *I Pet. iv. 15-17.*

* * *

He would say: You have heard how you are to suffer and conduct yourselves under it, but beware that it do not come upon you because you have deserved it on account of your evil deeds, but for Christ's sake. Now, St. Peter says: *Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.* Here he makes the suffering and anguish the more welcome because it is great, insomuch that we praise God through it, and because we are not worthy of it. *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?* He says: The time is come, as the prophets have foretold, when judgment must begin with us. When the Gospel is preached, God arrests and punishes sin. The pious He gently strokes, and first of all uses the rod of kind corrections; but what then will be done with those who do not believe? As though he had said: If He proceeds with such severity toward His own children, you may infer what must be the punishment of those who do not believe.

> The will of God shall be my pleasure,
> While here on earth is mine abode;
> My will is wrong beyond all measure,
> It doth not will what pleaseth God.
> The Christian's maxim e'er must be:
> What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me.

August 12

> And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator. *I Pet. iv. 18, 19.*

* * *

This passage is taken from the book of Proverbs, xi. 31: "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed [chastised for his sins] in the earth; much more the wicked and the sinner." The same thing also is said here by St. Peter. The righteous can hardly be saved, and only barely escapes. The righteous is he who believes, yet in his faith even he has trouble and labor to persevere and be saved, for he must pass through the fire. Where then will he be found who has no faith? *Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.* That is, they to whom God appoints suffering, which they have not themselves invited, should commit their souls to His charge. They should abide in good works, fall not away because of suffering, but commit themselves to their Creator, who is faithful. This is, indeed, a great consolation. God created thy soul without thy care or coöperation, while as yet thou wast not; so is He also able to preserve it. Therefore commit thyself to Him, yet in such a way that it be joined with good works.

Oft in sorrow, oft in woe,
Onward, Christians, onward go;
Bear the toil, maintain the strife,
Strengthened with the Bread of Life.

August 13

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the suffering of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. *I Pet. v. 1.*

* * *

Here St. Peter gives a direction for the behavior of such as are to preside over the people in the spiritual government. He has already said in the last chapter, that no one should teach or preach anything, unless he be sure that it is the Word of God, so that our conscience may stand on the firm rock. For this is imperative on us as Christians, that we must be assured what is well-pleasing to God, or not. Where this is wanting, none can be a Christian. Afterward he taught us, that whatever work or office any one might have, he should discharge it as though God wrought in it. But the present passage refers particularly to the bishops or pastors, as to what their fitness and conduct should be. Those elders, says St. Peter, who are to care for and to oversee the people, do I admonish, who am also one. Hence you clearly perceive that they whom he calls elders, have been in the ministry and have preached, since he speaks of himself also as an elder. And here St. Peter humbles himself—he does not say that he was a lord, although he might have had authority for it, since he was an Apostle of Christ—and speaks of himself not only as a fellow-elder, but also as a witness of the sufferings that were in Christ. As though he had said, I do not merely preach, but am a partaker with Christians, even suffering Christians. Thereby he shows that wherever Christians are they must suffer and be persecuted. Such is a genuine apostle.

Lord of the Church, we humbly pray
For those who guide us in Thy way,
And speak Thy holy Word;
With love divine their hearts inspire,
And touch their lips with hallowed fire,
And needful strength afford.

August 14

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. *I Pet. v. 2.*

* * *

Christ is the chief Shepherd and has many shepherds under Him, as also many herds of sheep which He has committed to His shepherds here and there. What are these shepherds to do? They are to feed the flock of Christ. Besides, they are to guard, lest the wolves come and rend the sheep. Now St. Peter says, particularly, *the flock of God,* as though he would say: Do you imagine that the flock is yours, ye are only servants. The bishops are Christ's servants, and their business is to guard Christ's sheep, and feed them. Therefore to feed them is nothing else but to preach the gospel, whereby souls are nourished, made fat and fruitful—since the sheep thrive upon the Gospel and the Word of God. This is alone the office of bishop. *The flock of God which is among you,* he says; that is, which is with you, not that they are to lie at your feet. And oversee them, *not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind.* There he has expressed in a single word what the prophet Ezekiel writes, chapter 34, of shepherds or bishops. And this is the meaning: You are not only to feed them, but also pay attention and be carefully faithful where it is called for and there is need. He says, not to do it of constraint, but of a ready mind. True it is, that no one should force himself uncalled into the ministry; but if he is called and required for it, he should enter it willingly, and discharge what his office demands. For they who do it from constraint, and who have no desire and love for it, will not properly discharge it.

Help them to preach the truth of God,
Redemption through the Savior's blood;
Nor let the Spirit cease
On all the Church His gifts to shower;
To them a messenger of power,
To us of life and peace.

August 15

> Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. *I Pet. v. 3, 4.*

* * *

Neither as being lords over God's heritage. This is the character of those who rule willingly enough for honor's sake, in order that they may rise high, and become powerful tyrants. Therefore he admonishes them that they should not act as though the people were subject to them, so that they might be gentlemen and might do as they chose. For we have a Master, who is Christ, who rules over our spirits. The bishops are to do not more than feed the sheep. Here St. Peter has broken down and condemned all that rule which the pope maintains, and clearly determines that they have not power to give one word of additional command, but that they are to be only servants, and say: Thus saith Christ, thy Master; therefore you are to do it. So Christ also speaks: "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you." *But being ensamples to the flock.* That is, see to it that you go before them at their head, and exhibit such conduct that your life may be an example to the people, and they may follow after you.

So may they live to Thee alone;
Then hear the welcome word, "Well done!"
And take their crown above;
Enter into their Majesty's joy,
And all eternity employ
In praise, and bliss, and love.

August 16

> Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. *I Pet. v. 5.*

* * *

St. Peter would have such order in the Christian Church that the young should follow the old, so that all might go on harmoniously—those beneath submissive to those above them. If this were now to be enforced, we should not need many laws. But St. Peter presumes that such elders are to be instructed and established in the Holy Ghost. Yea, all of you be subject one to another and be clothed with humility. The younger should be subject to the old, yet in such a manner that the latter shall not regard themselves as masters, but even should submit and follow where a younger is more judicious and learned; just as God in the Old Testament often selected young men, provided they were more wise than the old. Therefore should the younger be subject to the elder, and yet the elder, on the other hand, should be so disposed that each one in his heart shall hold himself as the least. Were this done we should have delightful peace, and all would go well on earth. This, therefore, we should do: Be subject one to another and be clothed with humility. For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. That is, those who will not give place, God casts down; and on the other hand, He exalts those who humble themselves. It is a common expression: Would to God he lived like common folks!

Thou sweetest Love, grace on us bestow,
Set our hearts with heavenly fire aglow,
That with hearts united we love each other,
Of one mind, in peace with every brother.
Lord, have mercy!

August 17

> Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you. *I Pet. v. 6, 7.*

* * *

God requires that each should be subject to the other; if this is done willingly and cheerfully, He will exalt you. But if you will not do it willingly, you shall do it from constraint. He will cast you down. *That He may exalt you in due time.* When God suffers His children to be cast down, it seems as if He would at length desert them. Therefore He says: Do not err on this account, and suffer yourself to be blinded; but be confident, since you have a sure promise that it is God's hand and will. Therefore you should not regard the time in which you are brought low, however long it may be. For though He has cast you down, He will yet lift you up. *Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.* These words are exceedingly precious. How could He have made them more sweet or tender? Why does He employ so great allurement? It is in order that no one may easily despond and give up his purpose. Therefore He gives us such consolation as this: God not only looks upon us, but also cares for us, and has a heartfelt regard for our lot. Hence, let all your cares go, and cast your burden on Him.

He may, awhile still staying,
His comforts keep from thee,
And, on His part delaying,
Seems to have utterly
Forgotten and forsaken
And put thee out of mind
Though thou'rt by grief o'ertaken,
No time for thee to find.

August 18

> Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. *I Pet. v. 8.*

* * *

Here he gives us a warning and would open our eyes; and it would be well worthy that the text should be written in golden letters. Here you perceive what this life is, and how it is described, so that we might well wish that we were dead. We are here in the devil's kingdom, just as a pilgrim, who arrives at an inn where he knows that all in the house are robbers. When he enters there he will arm himself in the best way he can devise, and will sleep but little; so are we now on earth, where the prince is an evil spirit, and has the hearts of men in his power, doing by them as he will. Therefore St. Peter would warn us to take heed unto ourselves, and act the part of a faithful servant, who knows the state of things here. Be vigilant, he says, not only as to the spirit, but also as to the body. For a vitiated body, prone to sleep when it eats and drinks itself full, will give the devil no opposition, though it belong even to those who have faith and spirit. Here observe especially that he says the devil *goeth about.* He does not pass before your eyes when you are armed against him, but looks out, before and behind you, within and without, where he may attack you. If he now meets you here, he will quickly return there, and attack you in another place. He employs every kind of cunning and art that he may bring you to fall. Let every one look to this.

Rise, my soul, to watch and pray,
From they sleep awake thee,
Let at last the evil day
Suddenly o'ertake thee;
For the foe, well we know,
Oft his harvest reapeth,
While the Christian sleepeth.

August 19

> Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. *I Pet. v. 9.*

* * *

Sober you should be and vigilant; but to this end the body must be in a proper frame. Yet with all this the devil is not routed. The true sword is this, that ye be strong and firm in the faith. If you in heart grasp hold of the Word of God and maintain your hold by faith, the devil cannot gain the advantage, but will be compelled to flee. If he comes and would drive you into despondency because of sin, only seize hold of the Word of God that speaks of the forgiveness of sin, and venture yourself thereon. Then will he be compelled quickly to let you alone. St. Peter says moreover: *Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.* That is, be not surprised that you must meet opposition from the devil, but comfort yourselves, inasmuch as you are not alone, but there are others besides you who must endure such suffering, and reflect that you have your brethren to share with you in the strife. There now you have the Epistle in which you have sufficiently heard a truly Christian doctrine; in a masterly manner he has described faith, love, and the holy cross; and he instructs and warns us as to how we should contend with the devil. Here the Apostle has forgotten nothing which it is necessary for a Christian to know.

Watch against the devil's snares,
Lest asleep he find thee;
For indeed, no pains he spares
To deceive and blind thee;
Satan's prey oft are they,
Who are soundly sleeping
And no good watch keeping.

August 20

But the God of all grace, who hath called us into His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. *I Pet. v. 10, 11.*

* * *

Here he (the Apostle) does what every faithful preacher should do; he not only takes care to feed the sheep, but also cares and prays for them. He concludes with a prayer that God may give them grace and strength that they may understand and retain the Word. *But the God of all grace make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.* That is the wish with which he commits them to God, who alone bestows grace, and not a single grace, but all grace richly in one, *who hath called us into His eternal glory by Christ Jesus.* God has called you through Christ that you might have eternal glory, not through any merit of your own, but for Christ's sake. If you have Him, you have through faith, without merit of yours, eternal glory and salvation, which will prepare you, that you may be strong, grow, and stand, and that you may be able to accomplish much. To this end He will strengthen and establish you, that you may be able to bear and suffer all. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Praise is the sacrifice word that we as Christians should offer up to God.

Yea, indeed, He bids us pray,
Promising to hear us,
E'er to be our Staff and Stay,
Ever to be near us.
Ere we plead, will He heed,
Strengthen, keep, defend us,
And deliv'rance send us.

August 21

> Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ. *II Pet. i. 1.*

* * *

Such is the subscription and the superscription of this Epistle, that we may know who writes it, and to whom he writes it, even to those who have heard the Word of God and abide in the faith. But what sort of a faith is this? In the righteousness (says he) which God gives. Thus he grants justification to faith alone as St. Paul also in Romans i. In the Gospel is that righteousness revealed which avails with God and comes from faith; as it stands written: "The just shall live by faith." Thus St. Peter would admonish them that they should be armed, and not let the doctrine of faith be torn away, which they have now apprehended and thoroughly known. And to this end he adjoins: *through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ,* that he may separate from it all human righteousness. For by faith alone are we righteous before God; wherefore faith is called a righteousness of God, for with the world it is of no account; yea, it is even condemned.

Since Christ hath full atonement made
And brought to us salvation,
Each Christian therefore may be glad
And build on this foundation:
Thy grace alone, dear Lord, I plead,
Thy death my life now is indeed,
For Thou hast paid my ransom.

August 22

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord. *II Pet. i. 2.*

* * *

This is the greeting usually prefixed to the Epistles; and it amounts to this: I wish you, in return for my service for you, to increase in grace and peace, and grow ever richer and richer in the grace which comes from the knowledge of God and the Lord Christ. But this is not to know God, that you should believe as the Turks, Jews, and devils believe, that God has created all things, or even that Christ was born of a virgin, suffered, died, and rose again; but this is the true knowledge, whereby you hold and know that God is thy God and Christ is thy Christ, which the devil and the false Christians could not believe. So that this knowledge is nothing else but a true Christian faith; for if you thus know God and Christ, you will then confide in them with your whole heart, and trust them in good and ill, in life and death. And here you perceive that St. Peter does not set himself particularly to write of faith, since he had already done that sufficiently in the First Epistle, but would admonish believers that they should prove their faith by good works; for he would not have a faith without good works, nor works without faith, but faith first and good works on and from faith. Therefore he says now also what follows.

He's just 'fore God, and he alone,
Who by this faith is living;
This faith will be good works be known,
To God the glory giving;
Faith gives thee peace with God above,
But thou thy neighbor too wilt love,
If thou art a new creature.

August 23

According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. *II Pet. i. 3.*

* * *

This is the first point, where Peter essays to describe what sort of blessings we have received through faith from God, even that to us (since we have known God by faith) there is given every kind of divine power. But what sort of power is it? It is such power as serves us toward life and godliness; that is, when we believe, then we attain this much, that God gives us the fullness of His power, which is so with and in us, that what we speak and work, it is not we that do it, but God himself does it. He is strong, powerful, and almighty in us, though we even suffer and die, and are weak in the eyes of the world. So that there is no power nor ability in us if we have not this power of God. But this power of God which is in us, St. Peter would not have so explained, as that we might make heaven and earth, and should work such miracles as God does. But we have the power of God within us so far as it is useful and necessary to us. Therefore the Apostle adjoins and says, *all things that pertain unto life and godliness;* that is, we have such power of God that by it we are eminently favored with grace to do good and to live forever. *Through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue.* Such power of God, and such rich grace, comes from no other source but from this knowledge of God. Wherefore, since the calling is not of us, we should not exalt ourselves as though we had done it, but render to Him praise and thanksgiving, because He has given us the Gospel, and thereby granted us power and might against the devil, death. and all evil.

Abiding, steadfast, firm, and sure,
The teachings of the Word endure:
Blest he who trusts this steadfast Word,
His anchor holds in Christ, the Lord.

August 24

> Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. *II Pet. i. 4.*

* * *

St. Peter adjoins this, that he may explain the nature and method of faith. If we know Him as God, then do we have through faith that eternal life and divine power wherewith we subdue death and the devil. Though we see and grasp it not, yet is it promised to us. We really have it all, though it does not yet appear, but at the last day we shall see it present before us. Here it begins in faith; though we have it not in its fullness, we have yet the assurance that we live here in the power of God, and shall afterward be saved forever. Whoever has this faith has the promise; whoever does not believe possesses it not, and must be lost forever. How great and precious a thing this is, Peter explains further, and says: *That by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.* This we have, he says, through the power of faith. that we should be partakers and have association or communion with the divine nature. But what is the divine nature? Is it eternal truth, righteousness, wisdom; eternal life, peace, joy, happiness, and whatever good one can name. Whoever then becomes a partaker of the divine nature, attains all this: that he is to live forever, and have eternal peace, delight, and joy, and is to be perfectly pure, just, and triumphant over the devil, sin, and death. As little as any one can take away from God, that He should not be eternal Life and Truth, just as little shall any one take it away from you.

Jesus, Thy Words alone impart
Eternal life, on these I live;
Here sweeter comforts cheer my heart
Than all the powers of nature give.

August 25

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge. *II Pet. i. 5.*

* * *

Here St. Peter takes up the admonition, that they should prove their faith by good works. Since such great blessing is bestowed upon you through faith (he would say), that you really have all that God is, do this besides: be diligent, and not sluggish; add to your faith, virtue; that is, let your faith break out before the world, so as to be zealous, busy, powerful, and active, and to do many works; let it not remain idle and unfruitful. You have a good inheritance and a good field, but see to it that you do not let thistles and weeds grow upon it. Discrimination or knowledge is, in the first place, that one should manifest an outward conduct, and the virtue of faith, in accordance with reason. For we should so far bridle and check the body, that we may be sober, vigorous, and fitted for good works; not that we should torture and mortify ourselves as some famous saints have done. For though God is likewise opposed to the sins that remain in the flesh, yet does He not require that for this reason you should destroy the body. Its viciousness and caprice you should guard against, but yet you are not to ruin or injure it, but give it its food and refreshment that it may remain sound and in living vigor. In the second place, discrimination means that one should lead a life carefully exact, and act with discretion in regard to outward things, as food and things of that sort; that one should not act in these things unreasonably, and that he should give his neighbor no provocation.

Holy Father! Thou hast taught me
I should live to Thee alone;
Year by year Thy hand hath brought me
On through dangers oft unknown.
When I wandered, Thou hast found me;
When I doubted, sent me light;
Still Thine arm has been around me,
All my paths were in Thy sight.

August 26

> And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness. *II Pet. i. 6.*

* * *

Temperance is not only in eating and drinking, but it is regularity in the whole life and conduct, words, works, manners; that we should not live too expensively, and should avoid excess in ornament and clothing, that none come out too proudly and make too lofty a show. But in regard to this St. Peter will not fix any rule, measure, or limit. It is a thing not to be tolerated in Christendom, that men should require by laws that there be a common rule on *temperance;* for people are unlike one another; one is of a strong, another is of a weak nature; and no one in all things is at all times situated as another. Therefore every one should see to himself how he is situated, and what he can bear. *And to temperance, patience.* This would St. Peter say: Though you lead a temperate and discreet life, you are not to think that you shall live without conflict and persecution. For if you believe, and lead a good Christian life, the world will not let it alone; it must persecute and hate you, in which you must show patience, which is a fruit of faith. *And to patience, godliness.* That is, that we in all our outward life, whatever we do or suffer, should so conduct ourselves that we may serve God therein, not seeking our own honor and gain, but that God alone may be glorified thereby; and that we should so demean ourselves that men may take knowledge that we do all for God's sake.

Savior! I follow on,
Guided by Thee,
Seeing not yet the hand
That leadeth me;
Hushed be my heart and still,
Fear I no further ill,
Only to meet Thy will
My will shall be.

August 27

> And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. *II Pet. i. 7, 8.*

* * *

In this St. Peter obliges us all to extend a helping hand one to another, like brethren, so that one should protect another, and none hate nor despise nor injure another. This is also an evident proof of faith, whereby we show we have the godliness of which he has spoken. *And to brotherly kindness charity.* Common love extends to both friend and enemy, even to those who do not show themselves friendly and brotherly towards us. Thus St. Peter has here comprehended in few words whatever pertains to the Christian life, and whatever are the works and fruits of faith: discretion, temperance, patience, a God-fearing life, brotherly love, and kindness to every one.

If you do such works, then are you on the right path, then do you have a real faith, and the knowledge of Christ becomes active and fruitful in you. Therefore see to it that you be not such as beat the air. Restrain your body, and act toward your neighbor even in such a manner as you know that Christ has done toward you.

Thou are Thyself the Way,
Thyself in me reveal;
So shall I pass my life's short day
Obedient to Thy will;
So shall I love my God,
Because He first loved me,
And praise Thee in Thy bright abode,
Through all eternity.

August 28

> But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. *II Pet. i. 9.*

* * *

Whoever has not such an assortment of the fruits of faith, gropes like a blind man here and there, rests in such a life that he knows not what his state is, has not real faith, and has of the knowledge of Christ nothing more than that he can say he has heard it. Therefore he goes along and gropes like a blind man on the way, in an unconscious life, and has forgotten that he was baptized and his sins were forgiven him, and is unthankful, and is an idle, negligent man, who suffers nothing to go to his heart, and neither feels nor tastes such great grace and blessing. This is the admonition which St. Peter gives to us who believe, to urge and enforce those works by which we shall evidence that the true faith is in us. And, besides, this ever remains true, that faith alone justifies; where this, then, is present, there works must follow.

O Thou who wouldst not have
One wretched sinner die,
Who diedst Thyself, my soul to save
From endless misery!
Teach me my course to run,
While yet I sojourn here,
That when Thou comest on Thy throne
I may with joy appear.

August 29

> Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. *II Pet. i. 10.*

* * *

The election and eternal foreknowledge of God is indeed in itself sure enough, so that man does not need to make that sure. The calling is also effectual and sure. For whoever hears the Gospel, and believes thereon, and is baptized, he is called and saved. Since we then are also thereunto called, we should apply so much diligence (says Peter), that our calling and election may be assured with us also, and not only with God. This is such a mode of scriptural expression as St. Paul uses, Eph. ii.: "Strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." For although there is no man, neither bad nor good, over whom God does not reign, since all creatures are His, yet Paul says he has no God, who does not know, love, and trust Him, although he has his being in God Himself. So here also, although the calling and election are effectual enough in themselves, yet with you it is not yet effectual and assured, since you are not yet certain that it includes you. Therefore St. Peter would have us prove such calling and election sure by good works. *For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.* That is, you are to stand fast, not stumble nor sin, but go onward thoroughly upright and active, and all shall go well with you. But if you would set it right by your reasonings, the devil will soon throw you into despair and hatred of God.

May we Thy precepts, Lord, fulfill,
And do on earth our Father's will,
As angels do above;
Still walk in Christ, the living Way,
With all Thy children, and obey
The law of Christian love.

August 30

For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *II Pet. i. 11.*

* * *

This is the way by which we enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore no one should propose, by such dreams and reasonings concerning faith as he has invented in his heart, to enter therein. There must be a living, active, tried faith. God help us! How have our deceivers written, taught, and spoken against this text, yet whoever has even the least measure and only a spark of faith, shall be saved when he comes to die. If you would pry into this matter, and in this way attain such faith quickly and suddenly, you will then have waited too long. You are to understand well, that they who are strong have enough to do, although we are not to despair even of such as are weak, for it may indeed well happen that they shall endure, though it will be sorely and hardly, and will cost much striving. But whoever carefully sees to it in his life that faith is invigorated and made strong by good works, he shall have an abundant entrance, and with calm spirit and confidence go into that life to come, so that he shall die comfortably, despising this life, and with gladness hastening to life eternal. But those who would come in otherwise, shall not enter thus with joy; they shall not have such an abundant entrance, but it shall be narrow and a hard one, so that they tremble, and would rather their life-day should be in weakness than that they should die.

Make me to walk in Thy commands—
'Tis a delightful road;
Nor let my head, or heart, or hands,
Offend against my God.

August 31

> Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. *II Pet. i. 12.*

* * *

That is the same that we also have often said, although God has now let such a great light go forth through the revelation of the Gospel, so that we know what true Christian doctrine is, and see how all Scripture insists upon it, yet this light we are not to neglect but use, not only for doctrine, but for the sake of remembrance. For there is a twofold office in the Christian Church, as St. Paul says, Rom. xii: "He that teacheth (let him wait) on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation." To teach, is when any one lays down the ground of faith, and sets it forth to those who have no knowledge of it. But to admonish, or, as Peter here says, *to put you always in remembrance of these things,* is to preach to those who know and have heard the matter already, so that they are seized hold of and awakened, in order that they should not be heedless, but go onward and prosper. We are all beladen with the old sluggard load, with our flesh and blood, that chooses forever the byroad and keeps us forever subject to its load, so that the soul easily falls asleep. Therefore we are ever to urge and shake it, as a master urges his servants, lest they become sluggish. If we must pursue this course for our temporal support, how much more necessary it is in spiritual matters.

O keep me watchful, then, and humble,
And suffer me no more to stray;
Uphold me when my feet would stumble
Nor let me loiter by the way;
Fill all my nature with Thy light,
O Radiance strong and bright!

September 1

> Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me. Moreover, I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance. *II Pet. i. 13-15.*

* * *

St. Peter calls his body a tabernacle wherein the soul dwells. So St. Paul also speaks *(II Cor. v.)*: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." Also, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." There the Apostle Paul speaks of the body as a house, and makes two homes, and two sojournings. So Peter speaks here of the body as a tabernacle wherein the soul rests. And Peter testifies of himself that he has become assured of eternal life, and to him God has shown beforehand when he should die. Peter now says, I will not only remind you with the living voice, but set such things also in writing, and charge you, through others, that you ever hold them in remembrance, through my life and after my death, and not let them go.

Jerusalem, thou city fair and high,
Would God I were in thee!
My longing heart fain, fain to thee
would fly.
It will not stay with me;
Far over vale and mountain,
Far over field and plain,
It hastes to seek its Fountain
And quit this world of pain.

September 2

> For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. *II Pet. i. 16-18.*

* * *

There St. Peter touches upon the history written in the Gospel, Matt. xii., how Jesus took to Himself three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John, and led them aside up into a high mountain, and was glorified before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His clothing was white as the light, and there appeared to Him Moses and Elias, who spoke with Him, while a light cloud overshadowed them, and a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." When the disciples heard that, they fell on their faces, and were very much afraid. But Jesus went to them, roused them up, and said, Stand up, be not afraid; then they lifted up their eyes, and saw no one but Jesus only; when they went down from the mountain He charged them that they should tell no one of this sight till He arose from the dead. So St. Peter would now say, that which I preach to you of Christ and of His coming, this Gospel that we preach, we have not devised or yet imagined, nor taken it from cunning fabulists who know how to speak brilliantly of all things (such as at that very time the Greeks were), such we have not listened to, nor have we followed them; that is, we preach not what is from the hands of men, but are sure that it is of God.

> Within Thy temple when they stand,
> To teach the truth as taught by Thee,
> Savior, like stars in Thy right hand,
> Let all Thy Church's pastors be.

September 3

> We have also a more sure Word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts. *II Pet. i. 19.*

* * *

This now is what Peter says: We have such a Word of prophecy as is sure in itself; see to it only that it be sure to you and you do well in paying heed to it. As though he would say: It will be a thing of necessity to you to hold firmly by it; for it is in regard to the Gospel as though one were imprisoned in the house, in the midst of the night, when it was stock dark. Then it were a matter of necessity that one should kindle a light, till the day came when he could see. Eminently such is the Gospel in the midst of the night and darkness, for all human reason is mere error and blindness, while the world is even nothing else but a kingdom of darkness. In this darkness has God now kindled a light, even the Gospel, whereby we may see and walk, while we are on the earth, till the morning dawn comes and the day breaks. Thus this text is also strongly against all human doctrine; for since the Word of God is the light in a dark and gloomy place, it follows that all besides is darkness. Therefore look not to this, how gifted those men are with reason who teach any other doctrine, however grandly they put it forth; if you cannot trace God's Word in it, then be in no doubt as to its being mere darkness. Wherefore since they have not the light, neither would receive it, they must remain in darkness and blindness. For the light teaches us all that which we ought to know and what is necessary to salvation—a thing which the world by wisdom and reason knows not. And this light we must still have and depend upon, even to the last day.

In these last days of sore distress
Grant us, dear Lord, true steadfastness,
That pure we keep till life is spent,
Thy Holy Word and Sacrament.

September 4

> Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. *II Pet. i. 20, 21.*

* * *

Here Peter refers to the matter of false doctrine: Since you know this, he says, that we have the Word of God, abide therein, and suffer yourselves not to be drawn from it by others that teach falsely, though they come and give forth that they have the Holy Spirit. For this you should know first of all, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation; by this be directed, and do not think that you shall explain the Scripture by your own reason and wisdom. In this the private interpretation of the Scripture by all the fathers is thrown down and rejected, and it is forbidden to build on such interpretation. Peter has forbidden you to explain it of yourself at all. The Holy Spirit will explain it Himself, or it shall remain unexplained. Thus Peter attacks even the boldest and best teachers; wherefore we should rest assured that none is to be believed who set the Scripture forth where he of himself opens and explains it. For there can be no true sense obtained by private interpretation. Thus this is the first chapter, wherein St. Peter has first of all taught us what those really good works are whereby we must give proof of our faith. In the second place, that no man in Christendom should preach anything but God's Word alone. Now there follows a just admonition, which Christ and Paul and all the Apostles have also given, that each should look out for himself and guard against false teachers.

Those haughty spirits, Lord, restrain,
Who o'er Thy Church with might would reign,
And always setting forth something new,
Devised to change Thy doctrine true.

September 5

> But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. *II Pet. ii. 1.*

* * *

This is what St. Peter would say: All prophecy must proceed from the Holy Spirit, even to the end of the world, just as it has gone forth from the beginning of the world, so that nothing shall be preached but what is God's Word. Yet it has ever so happened that close upon the true prophets and Word of God there have been false teachers, and so also it shall continue. *Who privily shall bring in damnable heresies:* sects, or states and orders. He calls them damnable, because whosoever is persuaded into them is already lost. These shall they secretly bring in, he says, not that they shall preach that the Gospel and the Holy Scriptures are false, but these names, God, Christ, faith, church, baptism, sacrament, they shall still hold and suffer to continue. But under these names they bring forward and set up something of another sort. Therefore, St. Peter says, there shall come high schools, doctors, priests, and monks and all classes of men, who shall bring in ruinous sects and orders, and shall lead the world astray by false doctrines. *Even denying the Lord that bought them.* See how admirably St. Peter expresses it. They deny the Master, he says, who has bought them. *And bring upon themselves swift destruction.* That is, their condemnation shall quickly overtake them; although it is plain that God forbears long, yet He will come soon enough. The longer they thus continue, the more terrible is death to them; for death can never be subdued, till sin and an evil conscience have been taken away. So will their condemnation come upon them hastily, so that they must abide in eternal death.

Thine honor rescue, Christ our Lord!
Hear Zion's sighs, and help afford!
Destroy the wiles of mighty foes,
Who now Thy Word and truth oppose.

September 6

> And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. *II Pet. ii. 2.*

* * *

It may be seen before our eyes, that it has come to pass just as St. Peter first declared. There has been not a father or mother who has not wished to have a priest, monk, or nun from among their children. Thus one fool has made another; for when people have seen the misfortune and misery that are found in the marriage state, and have not known that it is a safe estate, they have wished the best for their children, to help them to a happy life and freedom from wretchedness. *By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.* This, too, is a thing that may be seen before our eyes. To blaspheme is to libel, damn, and curse; as when one condemns the Christian estate as error and heresy. If one now should preach and say that their course is against the Gospel, because they lead men away from faith to works, then they go about and cry, "Thou art cursed, thou leadest the world astray." And they blaspheme even yet more in perverting what Christ has said and saying no to it. As when they, out of that which Christ has bidden, make nothing but a story, so that they forbid what Christ would have left free, and make that sin which He makes none, besides condemning and burning whoever preaches against it. The way of truth is a well ordered life and walk, in which there is no fraud nor hypocrisy.

> Do Thou Thyself for us Thy children fight,
> Withstand the devil, quell his rage and might,
> Whate'er assails Thy members left below,
> Do Thou o'erthrow.

September 7

> And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. *II Pet. ii. 3.*

* * *

This is specially the way of all false teachers, that they preach from avarice, that they may fill their belly. It is all of it done merely for gold. But if any one really preaches faith, that does not bring in much gold; for then all pilgrimages, indulgences, cloisters, and monasteries, to which more than half the wealth of the world has been devoted and given, must cease. But how do they act to get the gold into their own hands? *With feigned words make merchandise of you.* For they have selected the Word by which they make money of the people, as when they say, "If you give the dear Virgin, or this or that saint, so many hundred florins, you do a most excellent good work, and merit so much indulgence and forgiving of sin, and ransom as many souls from purgatory." This and the like are just carefully feigned words, to the end that they may shave us of our gold; for in all this there is really no desert, nor grace, nor blotting out of sin. Still they explain the noble words of Scripture, all of them, in such a way, that they may traffic with them for gold. They shall not drive this on at length. *Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.* Their sentence and condemnation shall fall upon them. Even now it goes forth; they shall not escape it, as St. Paul says *(II Tim. iii. 3):* "For their folly shall be manifested unto all men." God grant that they may be converted and come out from their dangerous state when they hear and understand it. Thus St. Peter has attempted to describe the shameful, godless life that was to succeed after the genuine doctrines of the Gospel, which the apostles preached.

> Destroy their counsels, Lord our God,
> And smite them with an iron rod,
> And let them fall into the snare
> Which for Thy Christians they prepare.

September 8

> For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment. *II Pet. ii. 4.*

* * *

By these words St. Peter terrifies those who live so gay and secure as we see those do who cleave to that which the Pope has enacted, being so confident and shameless that they would tread every one under foot. Therefore he would say this much: Is it not great presumption on their part that they go on so eagerly, and would bring everything to pass by their own head, as though God should yield to them, and spare them, who yet spared not the angels? As though he would say: These examples should justly terrify even the saints when they see such a severe sentence, that God has not spared those high spirits and noble beings who are far more learned and wise than we, but has thrust them into chains of darkness. To such severe sentence and condemnation He has ordained them, that they are held bound and imprisoned, and cannot flee away out of the hands of God, since they have been cast into outer darkness, as Christ says in the Gospel. And here St. Peter shows that the devils have not yet their final punishment, but still go about in a hardened, desperate state, and look every moment for their judgment, just as a man that is condemned to death is perfectly desperate, hardened, and more and more wicked. But their punishment has not yet overtaken them, but they are now only bound and reserved for it. This is the first example.

> Lord, on that day, that wrathful day,
> When man to judgment wakes from clay,
> Be Thou the trembling sinner's stay,
> Though heaven and earth shall pass away.

September 9

> And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly. *II Pet. ii. 5.*

* * *

This is, moreover, a fearful example, such indeed that there is not a more bitter one in the Scripture. Even one who is strong in faith might almost despair in view of it. For when such language and such a sentence go to a man's heart, and he thinks of it, that so he too ought to die, he must tremble and despond, if he is not well prepared, since among so many in the whole world, no one but these eight only were saved. But how have they deserved it, that God by such a severe sentence should have drowned all, one with another, in one mass, husband and wife, master and servant, young and old, beast and bird? Because they led such a wicked life. Noah was a pious man and a preacher of righteousness, and had already lived five hundred years, before the flood, when God commanded him to build an ark, on which he wrought a hundred years thereafter; and he led throughout a uniformly godly life. But the people laughed at him, and were only so much the more obstinate and foolish. But what the sin was for which God destroyed the world, the text of Gen. vi. tells us; that the children of God, that is, those who came of holy parents, and were instructed and brought up in the faith and in the knowledge of God, sought after the daughters of men, since they were fair, and took them for wives whom they would. Thereafter they came from this to be powerful tyrants, who did everything that they chose after their own caprice; wherefore God punished the world and destroyed it by the flood.

O Jesus Christ, do not delay,
But hasten our salvation!
We often tremble on our way
In fear and tribulation.
Then hear us when we cry to Thee;
Come, mighty Judge, and make us free
From every evil. Amen!

September 10

> And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly. *II Pet. ii. 6.*

* * *

This is the third example drawn from the destruction of those five cities *(Gen. xix.)*. Whereof also the prophet Ezekiel speaks, in chapter 16, addressing the city of Jerusalem: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw good." For Sodom was a land, like the garden of the Lord, as Moses says, and a rich mine of costly oil, and wine and all things, so that every one would think: Here dwells God. For this they were secure, and led such a shameful life as Moses has written of. Such sin breaks out only where there is an assurance that they have enough to eat and drink and to spare, and idleness is joined therewith; just as we still see, that the richer cites are the more shamefully do men live in them; but where there is hunger and trouble, there the sins are so much the fewer. Therefore God permits, in regard to those that are His, that their education should be severe, that they may remain pure. These are the three fearful examples whereby St. Peter threatens those that are godless.

Lord, Thee I seek:—I merit naught,
Yet pity and restore me;
Be not Thy wrath, just God, my lot,
Thy Son hath suffered for me.

September 11

> And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.) *II Pet. ii. 7, 8.*

* * *

Was it not a great aggravation that they not only rushed publicly and shamelessly into whoredom and adultery, but into such sins as may not be mentioned—insomuch that they did not even spare the angels who came to Lot, and they rushed on thus in their course, both young and old, in all the corners of the city! Against this, righteous Lot had daily preached and warned them, but all in vain, except that he is vexed by them, since he must stand still and cannot smooth over the evil, just as is the case with us now, for there is no more hope to reform or help this griveous course of life that the world leads. *(For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds).* Here Peter describes the cross which this holy man must have borne, while he preached to the people and brought up his daughters in faith; and so it is accounted toward him by God.

Fight the good fight
With all thy might;
Christ is thy strength, and
  Christ thy right:
Lay hold on life, and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally.

September 12

> The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished; but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. *II Pet. ii. 9, 10.*

* * *

If God spared not the young new world (says the Apostle), how much more severely and fearfully will He now punish those to whom the Gospel has been revealed and preached, and before which no such great light has arisen; as Christ also declares *(Matt. xi.)*: "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee." But all threatening is in vain—the godless will not turn. *But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise governments.* He calls kings, princes, and lords, and all civil magistracy, governments. Wherefore this is St. Peter's meaning: that they should be subject and obedient to civil magistracy; as the sword is introduced by God's ordinance, therefore they should fear.

Thine honor rescue, Christ, our Lord!
Hear Zion's sighs, and help afford;
Destroy the wiles of mighty foes,
Who now Thy Word and truth oppose.

September 13

> Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption. *II Pet. ii. 11, 12.*

* * *

They are not afraid to speak evil of angels, *whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.* They ought to tremble at reviling against dignities; yet they are unaffrighted and presumptuous in regard to it, and they revile with all zeal and recklessness. If even the strongest angels cannot endure judgment against themselves from the Lord, how then will these wretched people endure it?

Unreasonable brutes, Peter calls them, as though they had within them not a spark of anything that smacked of spirit, performed no spiritual duty required of them, but lived like the fool, and became effeminate through a carnal life. But in that he says they are naturally born to be taken and destroyed, it may be understood in a two-fold manner: first, as of those that take and destroy, such as the wolf, lion, bear, the sparrow-hawk and eagle—so these grasp to themselves, and tear away from others all they can, goods and honor. Secondly, of those that shall be taken, crushed, and destroyed at the judgment of the last day.

> That day of wrath, that dreadful day,
> When heav'n and earth shall pass away!
> What power shall be the sinner's stay?
> How shall he meet that dreadful day?

September 14

> And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you. *II Pet. ii. 13.*

* * *

As they that count it pleasure to riot in the daytime. They think if they only live well, and have good times, then they have enough of all things, and are right well off; this can be easily traced from their spiritual claim, when they say that whoever touches them as to their property or their body, is the devil. They themselves cannot deny this, that their whole system is framed to this end, that they may have lazy and idle times, and all that can suffice them. They will lade themselves with no trouble or labor, but every one must make and devote enough for them. God has commanded all men that they should eat their bread by the sweat of their brow, and he has imposed trial and anxiety upon all. Meanwhile, these young masters would slip their heads out of this noose, and busy themselves with kisses. *Spots they are and blemishes.* The true Christian life develops from faith, serves every one in love, bears the holy cross. But these have, in place of the cross, lust and luxury; instead of love to their neighbor, they seek their own interest. They are nothing but the spots and stains which Christianity must have as its shame and derision.

Hasten, O sinner, to be blest,
And stay not for the morrow's sun,
For fear the curse should thee arrest
Before the morrow is begun.

September 15

> Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls; a heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children. *II Pet. ii. 14.*

* * *

Why does St. Peter say, not that they are adulterers, but that they have eyes full of adultery? It is as much as though he would say, They think continually on nothing but fornication, and can never restrain their roguery, nor be satisfied and quiet. This is the cause of their gluttony and revel, so far as they can push it. *Beguiling unstable souls.* They allure and draw light-minded and unstable souls, who are without faith, to imagine that everything is spiritual; and all is shaped to this end, that men may think that in that estate every one shall have enough, and good times besides, and, moreover, that he shall reach heaven. And yet, it is all done to this end, that they may fill their bodies and their pocketbooks. *A heart they have exercised with covetous practices.* St. Peter says not, they are covetous, but they have a heart penetrated with covetousness, and especially exercised therein. All that this class practices and pursues is simple, pure covetousness. *Cursed children.* They are subject to the curse of God, so that before God they have no favor or salvation, and only become more wicked from day to day, and continually, also, greater blasphemers of God; so that they surely lade themselves full enough with the wrath and terrible judgment of God.

> Delay not, delay not, the hour is at hand;
> The earth shall dissolve, and the heavens shall fade;
> The dead, small and great, in the judgment shall stand;
> What power then, O sinner, shall lend thee its aid?

September 16

> Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. *II Pet. ii. 15.*

* * *

They should have taught the right way: how we must cleave to Christ, and come to God by faith, and through love to our neighbor; and thereafter bear the holy cross, and endure whatever meets us therefor. But they lead the people away from faith to their own works, which are not such as are of use to their neighbor. *Following the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.* Here St. Peter brings in an illustration from Numbers xxii.-xxiv. Although God gave Balaam His Word in his mouth, and he was forced to rise up to bless and glorify the children of Israel, yet the prophet afterward gave Balak, the king of the Moabites, counsel how he should manage with God's people, although he might not curse them and overcome them by power—so that they sinned against God. Then the king sets up an idol, Baal-Peor, and causes that the Moabite women, daughters of lords and princes, should ensnare the people to themselves to sacrifice to their gods; and when they had brought them to themselves, they made supplication to the idol with meats and drinks, and committed sin with the women. Then was God angry and commanded the chief of the people to be hanged on the gallows. Such was this prophet Balaam's advice for the sake of gold. Thus Peter compares especially these false teachers to the prophet Balaam, since they, even like Balaam, purely for the sake of gold, set up such idolatry and ruined souls.

> Destroy their counsels, Lord our God,
> And smite them with an iron rod,
> And let them fall into the snare
> Which for Thy Christians they prepare.

September 17

> But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet. *II Pet. ii. 16.*

* * *

Now the dumb beast of burden, the ass, signifies the people that lets itself be bridled and ridden, and goes as it is led, like the ass, who was forced and beaten cruelly when he went out of the way into the ditch, and must neither give place before the angel in the way, nor turn aside, and so must fall down. In the same way have these seducers also urged on the people, until they have become sensible that it is a thing not to be endured, that they are being unfairly dealt with and that their teachers wish to turn them aside from the way. The harshness has been so gross whereby they have troubled the people, that at length God has opened our lips and given words into our mouths, so that even the children speak of it; whereby their folly is made plain, so that they must be ashamed. We may say to them: We know that in times past you have preached the Word of God; but now you have become fools, and are possessed by avarice. What wonder that now the common people have been roused and impelled by God to speak the truth, who have been burdened and oppressed like a dumb beast of burden.

> That Thou art with us, loud proclaim,
> Who put'st our enemies to shame,
> Dost all their haughtiness suppress.
> And help Thine own in their distress.

September 18

These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever. *II Pet. ii. 17.*

* * *

Peter here says that they are wells without water, and clouds driven about by the whirlwind; that is, they make great show, and have nothing beside. They are like the dry, false, and exhausted wells, although they have the name and title of being true wells. For Scripture calls those who teach, wells, as the ones from whom should flow that wholesome doctrine by which souls are to be quickened. To this office are they anointed and set apart. But what do they do? Nothing, as a general thing; for they have nothing else but just the bare name, just as they are called shepherds, and yet are wolves. Besides, they are the clouds which the wind drives about—not like the thick, black, and lowering clouds which are wont to give us rain, but like those fleecy ones which move about and fly in the air, and are very light, which the wind drives wherever it will, after which no rain can follow. So our teachers also sweep about and move high in Christendom, like the clouds in heaven, but let themselves be driven about wherever the devil chooses, to whom they are ready to yield in all kinds of lusts. But yet they preach not a Word of God, like true teachers and preachers, who are called clouds in Scripture. *To whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever.* They live now at their ease, and things go with them just as they themselves would have them. But there shall come an eternal darkness upon them, although they do not believe nor apprehend it.

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy powerful hand:
Bread of heaven,
Feed me till I want no more!

September 19

> For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. *II Pet. ii. 18.*

* * *

If you ask how they may be called wells without water, and clouds without rain, while they yet preach throughout the whole world, St. Peter answers: They rain and preach, alas! altogether too much; but they are only vain, swollen, and puffed-up words, by which they blow the poor people's ears full, so that men think it is something fine; and yet it is nothing but show. *They allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.* This is what these wells and teachers do, so that they who were almost escaped must fall into the snare of wickedness, and for the first time be truly captured. A child that has been baptized, rescued from all sins, snatched from the devil, and set out from Adam into Christ, when he comes to reason is soon entangled and led away into error. Men should be taught of faith and love, and the holy cross, while our clergy go their own way, throw up their work whereby these persons fall back again into error, even though they had escaped it. But how does this come to pass? Thus: In that by guile they allure the people to the lust of the flesh. Here you clearly see that Peter speaks of none other than teachers who bear rule in Christendom, where men are baptized and believers—for among the Turks and heathen, no one has so escaped; it is only among Christians, where they have the chance to lead souls astray, and bring them into the snare of the devil.

O that the Lord would guide my ways,
To keep His statutes still!
O that my God would grant me grace
To know and do His will!

September 20

> While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. *II Pet. 19, 20.*

* * *

There Peter shows why they are the servants of corruption. To confess Christ is to know what he is, even our Savior, who forgives us our sins from pure grace. By this confession we escape the vice and come out from the pollution of the world. But though they should already have been delivered from sin in baptism, they shall afterwards be plunged therein, for that they have again gone from faith to their own works. For where there is no faith, the Spirit is absent; but where the Spirit is absent, there is nothing but flesh, so that there can be nothing at all that is pure. So has it come to pass hitherto in regard to Christianity. Rome first heard the pure Gospel, but afterward went back and fell away to human doctrines, until even upon herself all abominations have come up; so that her last end has become worse than her first, in that she is now far more hopeless in her heathenism than she ever was before she heard the Word of God.

Assist my soul, too apt to stray,
A stricter watch to keep;
And should I e'er forget Thy way,
Feed me till I want no more!

September 21

> For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. *II Pet. ii. 21.*

* * *

Here Peter speaks especially of teachers, by whom the people have been shamefully mistreated. The people have, indeed, had warning enough, but they have not minded it, they did not lay hold of the Gospel, but by their lives have deserved such anger of God. It is not such a trifling matter of sport that one must laugh at it, but of such seriousness that the heart should fear and tremble on account of it. Therefore we should lay hold upon it with seriousness, and pray that God would turn away from us His anger and such plagues. For this calamity does not come unforseen, but it is sent by God as a punishment, as St. Paul says: "Since they have not received the love of the truth, that they might be saved, therefore shall God send upon them strong delusion so that they shall believe a lie" *(II Thess. ii.)*. For had the punishment gone so far only that none but the false teachers were lost, it would have been a small thing; but they have had the rule and carried all the world with them to hell. Therefore, in regard to the evil, we are to take no counsel except to apprehend the matter in godly fear and humility, confess our guilt, and pray God to turn away the punishment from us.

> Though I have grieved Thy Spirit, Lord,
> His help and comfort still afford;
> And let me now come near Thy throne,
> To plead the merits of Thy Son.

September 22

> But it is happened to them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. *II Pet. ii. 22.*

* * *

This proverb St. Peter has taken out of the book of Proverbs, chapter 26, where Solomon says, "A man who repeats his folly is like the dog who turns again to his vomit." By baptism they have thrown off unbelief, and have been washed from their polluted life, and have entered upon a pure life of faith and love, while they fall off from it again to unbelief and their own works, and defile themselves again in the dirt. We are not to make this proverb bear on works; for little is accomplished by one's saying, "Henceforth I shall be chaste, meek, and patient," for though you may awhile conceal the mischief in your heart, yet at last it comes out. But if you will be pious, pray God that He will give you a real faith, and see to it that you forsake your unbelief. When you shall then have attained faith, good works shall afterwards take care of themselves, so that you will live purely and chastely, even though you should secure yourself by no other means.

Will ye let Him die in vain?
Crucify your Lord again?
Why, ye ransomed sinners, why
Will ye slight His grace, and die?

September 23

> This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior. *II Pet. iii. 1, 2.*

* * *

Here St. Peter comes to us again, and warns us in this chapter to be prepared, and look every moment for the last day. And so he says in the first of it, that he has written this Epistle, not in order to lay down a ground of faith, which he had done before, but to awaken, remind, arrest, and urge them not to forget the same, and to abide in the clear view and understanding which they have of a true Christian life. For it is the preacher's office, as we have said often, not only to teach, but also continually to admonish and restrain. For since our flesh and blood ever clings to us, God's Word must be stronger in us, that we may not give room to the flesh, but strive against it, and gain the upper hand of it.

> Drive away the gloomy night
> Of erroneous reflection;
> Quench all thoughts that are not right,
> Hold my reason in subjection:
> Grant that I from Thee with yearning
> Wisdom may be always learning.

September 24

> Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. *II Pet. iii. 3, 4.*

* * *

There have been many who have altogether rejected the idea of the coming of the last day. Against such scoffers St. Peter here warns us, and tells us beforehand that they must come and rush into this hazard and live as they please. So shall be fulfilled that which Christ says *(Matt. xiv.)*: "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. . " And once more *(Luke xxvii.)*: "For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day," that is, so quick and unforeseen and sudden shall He break in upon it, while the world shall be living first and foremost for itself and shall throw God's Word to the winds. Therefore this shall be a sign that the last day is near: the people shall live as they please, according to all their lusts, and we hear such talk as this: "Where is the promise of His coming? The world has stood so long and continued to abide, is it now for the first time to be otherwise?" Thus Peter warns us that we should not be surprised, and that we have a sure sign that the day will soon come.

While life's dark maze I tread,
And griefs around me spread,
Wipe sorrow's tears away,
Be Thou my Guide;
Nor let me ever stray
From Thee aside.

September 25

> For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. *II Pet. iii. 5, 6.*

* * *

Here St. Peter speaks somewhat particularly of the creation. The heaven and the earth stood fast aforetime; they were made of water and stood in the water, by the Word of God. Heaven and earth have a beginning: they have not been forever; the heaven was made from the water, and there was water above and beneath, but the earth is made and stands in the water, as Moses writes, whom St. Peter here quotes. All is sustained by God's Word, as it also was made by the same, as it is not their nature so to stand. Therefore if God did not sustain it, it must all soon fall down and sink into the water. For God spoke a word of power when He said: "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear;" that is, let the water put itself aside and give room for the earth to come forth, whereon man might dwell, yet naturally the waters should spread themselves over the earth. Therefore this is, at the present day, one of the greatest miracles that God works. Now St. Peter would say this: So obstinate and stupid are these scoffers, that they will not do honor to the Holy Spirit, though they read how God holds up the earth in the water, whence they should be convinced that all stands in the hands of God. Therefore, since God at that time drowned the earth, so he will deal with us even yet again. For that example should certainly convince us that, as in that very case He has not lied, so again he will not lie.

Thy life was given for me,
Thy blood, O Lord, was shed,
That I might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
Thy life was given for me:
What have I giv'n for Thee?

September 26

> But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. *II Pet. iii. 7.*

* * *

At that time, when God destroyed the world by a flood, the water pressed down from above, up from beneath and from all sides, so that nothing could be seen but water only; because the earth, as its nature was, must be swallowed up in the water. But now He has promised, and given the rainbow for a sign in heaven, that He will no more destroy the world by water. Therefore He will destroy it and let it perish by fire, so that here it shall be fire only, as there it was water only. Of which St. Paul *(II Thess. i.)* says: "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire," etc. So I Cor. iii.: "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire." So when the last day breaks and bursts in on the world, it will in a moment be fire only; what is in heaven and earth shall be turned to dust and ashes, and all things must be changed by fire, as that change took place by water.

Thy Father's home of light,
Thy rainbow-circled throne,
Were left for earthly night,
For wanderings sad and lone.
Yea, all was left for me:
Have I left aught for Thee?

September 27

> But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *II Pet. iii. 8-10.*

* * *

With these words St. Peter meets those of whom he has just spoken, who say: "The Apostles have said much about the Last Day coming quickly, and yet so long a time is past, and still all continues as heretofore." But in God's sight there is no reckoning of time—a thousand years must be before Him, as it were, a day. Therefore the first man, Adam, is just as near to Him as he who shall be last born before the last day. We can, by our reason, look at time only according to its durations; we must begin to count from Adam, one year after another, even to the last day. But before God it is all in one heap; what is long with us is short with Him. So when man dies, the body is buried and wastes away, lies in the earth and knows nothing; but when the first man rises up at the last day, he will think he has lain there scarcely an hour, and yet he will look about himself and become assured that many people were born of him and have come after him of whom he had no knowledge at all.

Give me a faithful heart—
Likeness to Thee—
That each departing day
Henceforth may see
Some work of love begun,
Some deed of kindness done,
Some wand'rer sought and won,
Something for Thee.

September 28

> Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. *II Pet. iii. 11-13.*

* * *

Since you know this, that all must pass away, both heaven and earth, think how you should be prepared to meet this day, by a holy and godly life and conversation. For Peter describes this day as one that is to come even now, so that men should be prepared for it, to hope for it with joy, and even hasten to run to meet it, as that which sets us free from death, sin, and hell. God has promised by the prophets, here and there, that he would create a new heaven and a new earth, as in Isa.: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. . . But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create." So in chapter 30: "Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days." And Christ says *(Matt. xiii.)*: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." How that is to pass away we cannot know, except that the promise is, that such a heaven and earth are to be, wherein no sin, but righteousness only, and the children of God shall dwell. Here some may disquiet themselves as to whether the saints shall have their station in heaven or on earth. The text seems to imply that man shall dwell upon the earth, yet so that all heaven and earth shall be a paradise wherein God dwells, for God dwells not alone in heaven, but in all places, wherefore the elect shall be also even where He is.

> How will my heart endure
> The terrors of that day,
> When earth and heaven before His face
> Astonished shrink away?

September 29

> Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction. *II Pet. iii. 14-16.*

* * *

There St. Peter bears testimony for the Apostle Paul in respect to his doctrine, which shows plainly enough that this Epistle was written long after St. Paul's Epistles. He has seen that many unstable spirits wrested and perverted St. Paul in his words and doctrines, inasmuch as some things in his Epistles are hard to be understood—as when he speaks in this way, "that no one is justified by works, but by faith alone"; so, too, "the law is given to make sin more gross"; so, too, "where sin abounded, there grace much more abounds," and more passages of the same sort. For when men hear such, then they say, if that is true, we will go on indolently, and do no good work, and so be righteous; as men even now say, that we forbid good works. If one so perverts St. Paul's own words, what wonder is it that they should, in like manner, pervert ours! .

O Jesus Christ, do not delay,
But hasten our salvation!
We often tremble on our way
In fear and tribulation.
Then hear us when we cry to Thee;
Come, mighty Judge, and make us free
From every evil. Amen!

September 30

> Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. *II Pet. iii. 17, 18.*

* * *

Since you know, St. Peter says, all that has been said above, and see that many false teachers must come, who lead the world astray, and such scoffers as pervert the Scripture and will not understand it, take care of yourselves; guard against them with diligence, that you fall not from faith by doctrines of error; and grow so as to become stronger from day to day by the steadfast practice and preaching of the Word of God. Here observe how great care the Apostle shows for those who have come to believe, which urged him even to write these two Epistles, wherein is richly comprehended what a Christian should know, besides also that which is to come. May God give His grace, that we also may seize hold upon and retain it. Amen.

> Come, O Christ, and loose the chains that bind us!
> Lead us forth, and cast this world behind us!
> With Thee, th' Anointed,
> Finds the soul its joy and rest appointed.

October 1

> Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation. *Jude 3, 4a.*

* * *

This is as much as to say: I am necessitated to write to you so that I may remind and admonish you how you should go forward and persevere in the faith, which has already before this been once preached to you. In other words, it is necessary that I should admonish you to be on your guard and remain in the right way. *For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old time ordained to this condemnation.* For this cause will I remind you (he says) that you should abide in the faith which you have heard, because there is even now a wavering, and already there have come preachers who set up other doctrines besides faith, by which people are led away gently and unsuspectingly from the true way. This we now well understand, since we know that no one is righteous and justified by works of his own, but only through faith in Christ, insomuch that he must rely on the work of Christ as his chief good. Wherever anyone secretly introduces anything else than this doctrine of faith in regard to such orders and works, he leads the people astray, so that they will be condemned along with him.

In vain would boasting reason find
The path to happiness and God;
Her weak directions leave the mind
Bewildered in a doubtful road.

The various forms that men devise,
To shake my faith with treacherous art,
I scorn as vanity and lies,
And bind Thy Gospel to my heart.

October 2

> For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. *Jude 4.*

* * *

That Gospel which is given us concerning the grace of God, and which sets Christ before us as He is offered to and bestowed upon us, with all that He has, that we may be freed from sin, death, and all evil, such grace and blessing offered to us by the Gospel, they use merely to indulge their wantonness. That is, they call Jesus Christ indeed, and praise the Gospel, but they bring in such an order as therein to work their own caprice in eating and drinking and wanton life; *denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.* They deny that Christ is Lord in fact and by their works. They hold not Him but themselves as their Lord. They lead the people astray to their own works, and it is just as much as if they said: Christ is of no avail to you. His works in no way help you, but you must by your own works merit salvation. This they deny the Lord, who has bought us with His blood.

Jesus, Thy words alone impart
Eternal life; on these I live;
Here sweeter comforts cheer my heart
Than all the powers of nature give.

Here let my constant feet abide;
Thou art the true, the living Way;
Let Thy good Spirit be my guide
To the bright realms of endless day.

October 3

> I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. *Jude 5, 6, 7.*

* * *

Here he adduces also three examples, as St. Peter does in his Epistle. But the first which he presents is to this effect: God permitted the children of Israel, whom He had brought out of Egypt by many wonderful works, when they did not believe, to be overthrown and defeated; so that of them all not more than two survived, when there were numbered, of all that went forth from twenty years of age and above, more than six thousand men. This example he sets forth as a warning and a terror; as if he would say: Those who are now called Christians and under this name turn the grace of God into wantonness are to beware lest it come to pass as it came to pass with those. And true enough, these are the times when the Popedom is exalted and the Gospel kept secret through the whole world; when, too, there comes continually one plague after another by which God has punished the unbelieving and thrown them into the throat of the devil.

We have a sure prophetic Word,
By inspiration of the Lord;
And though assailed on every hand,
Jehovah's Word shall ever stand.

By powers of empire banned and spurned,
By pagan pride rejected, spurned,
The Word still stands the Christian's trust,
While haughty empires lie in dust.

October 4

Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. *Jude 8.*

* * *

These teachers he calls dreamers. For just as when a man lies in a dream, he deals with images and thinks he has something real, but when he awakes it is nothing at all, but he sees then that it was a dream and counts it of no importance, so too, what these say is nothing else than a mere dream. For when once their eyes shall be open, they shall see that it is nothing at all; so he has given them a truly fitting name, inasmuch as they deal with dreams by which they deceive themselves and the world, who *despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.* Their characteristic is also that they will not be subject to civil authority; yet we have been taught that while we live on earth we are all under obligation, and that we are to be subject and obedient to the sovereignty; for the Christian faith does not do away with civil rule. Therefore no one can except himself from it.

When Israel through the desert passed,
A fiery pillar went before,
To guide them through the dreary waste,
And lessen the fatigues they bore.

Such is Thy glorious Word, O God!
'Tis for our light and guidance given;
It sheds its luster all abroad,
And points the path to bliss and heaven.

Ye favored lands, that have this Word,
Ye saints, who feel its saving power,
Unite your tongues to praise the Lord,
And his distinguished grace adore.

October 5

But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. *Jude 10.*

* * *

Such scoffers are they (he says) that they can do nothing else but anathematize and curse and give over to the devil for his own, not only kings and dignities, but God also and the saints. They know not that our salvation stands on the foundation of faith and love. They cannot endure that their works should be rejected and condemned, and that it should be preached that Christ alone must help us by His works. Therefore they curse and scoff at all Christian doctrine of which they are ignorant, but what they know, through natural perception, will bring in gold and treasures. To this they devote themselves with energy and thereby corrupt themselves and everyone else.

If God were not on our side
When round us foes are raging,
Were not Himself our Help and Guide
When bitter war they're waging,
Were He not Israel's mighty shield,
To whom their utmost craft must yield,
We surely must have perished.

But now no human wit or might
His chosen people frighteth,
God sitteth in the highest height,
And He their counsels blighteth;
When craftiest snares and nets they lay,
God doth His work another way,
And makes a path before us.

October 6

> Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. *Jude 11.*

* * *

Cain struck his brother dead simply because he was more pious than himself, for his brother's offering was acceptable before God, but his own was not. So now the way of Cain is to rely on one's good works, to scoff at those works which are good and true, and to circumvent and slay those who go in the right way. They should be fixed inwardly in the hope of divine grace. Yet they go forth and put their trust in various outward works, of this kind or that, and they do them only for the sake of gold, that they may fill their bellies, like the prophet, Balaam. *And perished in the gainsaying of Core.* Of the rebellion of Core, we have an account in Numbers, Chapter 16. Moses was summoned by God to lead the people out of Egypt and his brother, Aaron, was appointed by God as High Priest. Core attaches to himself two-hunrded and fifty men of the foremost and most distinguished among the people and excites such a commotion and tumult that Moses and Aaron are forced to flee. Moses fell upon his face and prayed that God might not accept their sacrifice, and he bade the congregation of the people to draw back from them. When he had spoken these words, the earth quaked, opened, and swallowed up Core, together with the other leaders of the rebellion. This example Jude sets forth for these scoffers who blame us for making a commotion while we preach against them, when they are really the ones who make all the trouble. For Christ is our Aaron and High Priest, whom we would allow to rule alone.

They call us heretics, and aye
Their Christian name are flaunting;
They seek to spill our blood, while they
Their fear of God are vaunting.
Ah, God! that precious name of Thine
O'er many a wicked deed must shine,
But Thou wilt once avenge it.

October 7

> These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. *Jude 12, 13.*

* * *

These men think they must be the best part and the jewel, as it were, of Christendom, while they are merely an abomination. They feed not the sheep, but are themselves the wolves that devour the sheep. They are clouds that hang over us in the air, sit up high in the churches as those that should preach, and yet they do not preach at all, but let themselves be driven by the devil this way and the other. So too (he says) there are lifeless, fruitless trees, like the trees of autumn. There is with them neither word nor work, but all is dead to the sea, that is, as the wind tosses and throws up the waves and billows upon the water, so these, too, go just as the devil leads them. They foam at their own shame; like a heated pot, they are so full of pollution that they run over. They are wandering stars, planets as they are called, that go backward and not in a steady, straight course, so that they make no true progress. Their life and doctrine is mere error in which they lead themselves astray, and all that follow after them. Therefore for them is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

They open wide their ravenous jaws,
And threaten to devour us,
But thanks to God, who rules our cause,
They shall not overpower us;
Their snares He yet will bring to naught,
And overthrow what they have taught;
God is too mighty for them.

October 8

> And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. *Jude 14, 15.*

* * *

God from the beginning of the world has left it to some to make His Word known (the Word that promises His favor and salvation to believers, but threatens the unbelieving with judgment and condemnation), even till Christ's coming down from heaven, when it is openly preached to the whole world. But before the birth of Christ God took to Himself for this purpose only a single line from Adam to Abraham, and thence to David down to Mary the mother of Christ, who possessed His Word. Thus also this father, Enoch, insisted on that Word of God which he received from his father, Adam, and which he had of the Holy Spirit. Enoch prophesied: *Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all.* This can only be said of the last day, on which He will come with all His saints to execute judgment, and He names those who shall suffer under this judgment. He at once strikes upon their life and preaching, and would say this much: They speak fiercely and harshly against the Lord who is to come. They are shameless and proud, they deride and revile Him. These godless ones the Lord will punish (he says) because their preaching is shameless and presumptuous. Thus has Enoch struck in this passage at the very state which before the last day should be in the world, as we now see it before our eyes.

Our foes, O God, are in Thy hand,
Thou knowest their endeavor;
But only give us strength to stand,
And let us waver never,
Though reason strives with faith, and still
It fears to wholly trust Thy will,
And sees not Thy salvation.

October 11

> But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. *Jude 20, 21.*

* * *

Here he defines in a few words that in which a thoroughly Christian life consists. Faith is laid for the foundation on which we are to build; but to build is to grow from day to day in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, and this takes place through the working of the Holy Spirit. When we are thus built up we shall do no work to merit anything or to be saved by it, but all to the service of our neighbor. Thus we are to watch that we abide in love and not fall from it, as he says: *Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.* That is the hope toward which the holy cross moves. Therefore our life should be so shaped as to be nothing else than a steady longing and waiting for that life to come, yet so, that that waiting be grounded on the mercy of Christ, so that we shall call upon Him to help us from this to that life out of pure mercy and not for any work or merit of ours.

We stand bereft of help, and poor and lonely.
'Twere vain to trust in man;—with Thee, Lord, only
We may defeat the enemies around us
Who seek to wound us.

Thou art our Champion who canst overthrow them,
And save the little flock now crushed below them,
We trust in Thee; for Jesus' sake be near us!
Help, Helper, hear us!

October 10

> But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. *Jude 17-19.*

* * *

Who these scoffers are we have stated above. They walk, moreover, after their own lusts, not merely their fleshly lusts, but those of that godless life which they lead, shaping all things as it pleases them. They care neither for worldly authority nor the Word of God. They float about between heaven and earth in their lust, just as the devil leads them. *These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.* Here he has touched on what Peter speaks of, namely, their secretly bringing in of pestilent sects; they divide the unity that is in faith, will not let the ordinary estate of a Christian answer, but set up other estates and pretend to serve God by these. Besides, they are sensual or brutish men, who have no more understanding and spirit than an ox or an ass. They walk according to their natural reason and fleshly mind. They have no Word of God by which they judge themselves or by which they can live.

Ah! Lord our God, let them not be confounded
Who, though by want, and woe, and pain surrounded,
Yet day and night still for Thy hope are sighing,
To Thee are crying.

But put to shame Thy foes, who breathe defiance,
And make their own vain might their sole reliance;
O turn in mercy in Thy generation,
Lord, have compassion!

October 9

> These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage. *Jude 16.*

* * *

When men will not let their own circumstances be fair and favorable, then there is nothing but murmuring and complaining. So when one does not give a bishop the title he claims, then they cry out against disobedience. And even though one should attack them with Scripture, yet they say that none but they only must be suffered to explain Scripture. Thus they live in all respects as they will, according to their lusts, and moreover their whole law and claim is nothing but the fullness of mere high, proud, puffed up words, which have nothing to back them. *Having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.* This is their way of judging all, according to the person. They have reduced it all to an outward matter, and they have accounted it gross sin if anyone does not hold to such views, so that Jude says well that they put a mask upon everything and have this only before their eyes. Thus no one knows anything of faith, of love, or of the cross; whence the people generally are content to eat and play the fool and devote all their property in the manner they do, as if to the true service of God. It is thus that they hold themselves up to respect for advantage sake.

> But heaven and earth, O Lord, are Thine,
> For Thou alone hast made them;
> Thy light let on Thy people shine,
> And in their sorrows aid them;
> Kindle our hearts to love and faith
> That shall be steadfast e'en to death,
> Howe'er the world may murmur.

October 12

> And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. *Jude 22-25.*

* * *

Jude would say this much: On some take pity, some save; that is, let your life be so shaped that it shall allow you to have compassion on those who are spiritually wretched, blind, and dumb. Have no joy or pleasure over them and have nothing to do with them, only pity them. But as to those others whom you can draw forth, save them by fire, deal kindly and gently with them, as God has dealt with you. Treat them not harshly or rudely, but feel toward them as those that lie in the fire, whom you must draw out and rescue with all care, consideration, and diligence. If they will not suffer themselves to be drawn out, we must let them go and weep over them. *Hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.* We have indeed received the Holy Spirit by faith and have been made clean, but as long as we live here, the old garment of our flesh and blood clings to us still and will not relax its hold. This spotted garment we should lay off and draw away from as long as we live. *Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

As true as God's own Word is true
Not earth nor hell with all their crew
Against us shall prevail.
A jest and byword are they grown;
God is with us; we are His own;
Our victory cannot fail.

October 13

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee. *John xvii. 1.*

* * *

Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son. To "glorify" signifies to praise, to extol, to magnify, and make of great fame. The hour (as He would say) is now approaching, and is at hand, in which I am to suffer, and to die a death the most ignominious of all deaths; by which all my renown, the splendor of my life and name, and my dignity, will be obscured and darkened. He prays with such feeling and so urgently, as though He were now hanging on the cross, and wished to say: I am now in the midst of ignominy and death and lie buried in the deepest darkness. Now is the time to deliver Me, that I may be exalted and raised to honors. *That Thy Son also may glorify Thee.* He is the Son of God from everlasting, in the same majesty, power and honor; but now in the world he is in exile, in infirmity, in death, in ignomy, as though deserted by His Father and all men. Therefore it is that He thus prays: "I know, O Father, that I came into the world by Thy mission, and that therefore Thou wilt not suffer Thy Son to remain buried in His darkness. Wherefore be pleased to glorify Me, not that I might thereby please Myself, but do it for Thine own honor and glory."

And though awhile He be
Hid from the eyes of men,
His people look to see
Their great High Priest again:
In brightest glory He will come,
And take His waiting people home.

October 14

As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. *John xvii. 2.*

* * *

He did not pray for Himself, that He might have all the glory to Himself, but that He might benefit and serve us unto our attainment of eternal life. And it is on this account that He glories, that power is given unto Him of the Father over all flesh; that is, over all who are in the earth, the great, the mighty, the possessors of wealth, and the highest in honor; and that His design is to honor His miserable followers who cleave unto Him and who are loaded with shame and ignominy, so highly as to bring them to the enjoyment of an eternal and immortal life. Here, then, centers all our hope, consolation and trust; that we, who believe in Christ and cleave to His Word, are His own, whom the Father gave unto Him as His peculiar portion. And Christ has undertaken the care of us to defend and keep us. These words, "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh that He should give eternal life," etc., will not admit of the conclusion that He is only man; for such power, even of ruling over all flesh and of giving eternal life, can be given to no creature. To give eternal life unto others is the work and power of God alone. When therefore Christ confesses that He has the power to give eternal life unto His own, and that He has received the same from the Father, He indicates with sufficient clearness that He is of the same power and essence of the Father.

Soon will the saints in glory meet,
Soon walk through every golden street,
And sing on every blissful plain,—
To live is Christ, to die is gain.

October 15

And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. *John xvii. 3.*

* * *

In these words Christ shows what eternal life is. He says: Eternal life is thus—and My disciples shall receive it in this way—"that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Let him who would walk safely flee and avoid all those things which natural reason and human thoughts are accustomed to advance concerning this article; for there is no counsel and wisdom that can avail against the seducing delusions of the devil, nor anything but our having a steady faith in the plain and simple words of the Scriptures, not at all relying upon our own thoughts and speculations, but saying: Whatever Christ has said must be true, although it may be beyond the comprehension of me, or of any other mortal, *how* it can be true. For it is utterly impossible that human reason should apprehend even the least article of faith. Nor can any mortal have any right thought or sure knowledge of God whatever, without the Word of God. The farther and more deeply human reason goes in the investigation of God, His works, His will, and His counsel, the farther it gets from the knowledge of them, until it comes at last to know nothing and to believe nothing of God at all. Here you see the words are plain: Christ giveth to all that believe eternal life; but no one can give eternal life save God only; wherefore it must incontrovertibly follow that Christ is truly and naturally God.

Hail Him, ye heirs of David's line,
Whom David Lord did call;
The God incarnate, Man divine:
And crown Him Lord of all!

October 16

> I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. *John xvii. 4.*

* * *

Christ, our Lord, during His life upon earth glorified the Father by preaching and highly extolling His praise and glory; of which there are testimonies to be found everywhere throughout the Gospels, where He continually teaches and glories that He was sent of the Father, and refers to the Father, and ascribes to the Father the whole of His life and all that He possesses or has power to do. Then He says: *"I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."* If Thy glory, praise, and honor are to be proclaimed abroad, and declared by Me, then I must of necessity be buried in darkness and ignominy. For all the time He was doing the will of the Father by preaching and working signs and miracles, and was engaged in those works which were approved of God, and well-pleasing unto Him, the world was bitterly enraged against Him, and could not endure Him. And it was thus that He finished the work which was given Him to do.—And now, as Christ our Head prays, so ought we also who cleave to Him pray, that He would glorify Himself in us. For as it was with Him on earth, so also it is with us; for His sake (when we glorify Him and exalt His name by our life and doctrine), we must submit to be loaded with ignominy and to be condemned to and punished with death. But that He might retain His honor and dignity, and defend His Word against vile calumniators and blasphemous accusers, He must rescue us, and quite reverse the scene, making the world to be unjust and condemned to the deepest shame, while we are translated into glory and eternal life.

> The sixth, when victory was won,
> "Tis finished!" for Thy work was done.
> Grant Lord, that onward pressing
> We may the work Thou dost impose
> Fulfill with Thine own blessing.

October 17

And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was. *John xvii. 5.*

* * *

Here again is a great and expressive text concerning the *divinity* of Christ. Here Christ expressly says, that He had honor and was glorious with the Father before the foundation of the world. *Before the world was* nothing could have existence but *God* only, for there is no medium between the world and God, or between the creature and the Creator. Jesus prays: Dear Father, glorify Me, who am Thine only Son from everlasting, of the same divinity, essence, and glory with Thyself, in order that He might show *how* He wishes to be glorified, that is, manifested, preached, and believed on; namely, as being He who had His glory from all eternity, truly God and naturally Son of the Father. But heretics will wickedly pervert this passage, and say: "It is true that Christ had His glory before the world was; but it does not from that follow that he is therefore to be considered eternally and naturally God. He might have been some creature, higher and exalted above all the rest of the creatures, before the world was, and so, a medium in the world between God and all other creatures." But we must steadfastly believe and rest on the words of Jesus, not suffering men to wrest them from us nor to maliciously pervert them, nor to imagine or frame anything medium between God and the world. This is the most certain of all certainties, that Christ, since He had His glory before the world was, cannot be a creature. For the term "world" comprehends all things that are created, everything that was not from eternity but had a beginning.

O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace!

October 18

I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world. *John xvii. 6a.*

* * *

Manifesting Thy name means nothing else but His glorifying the Father: and thus what He preached concerning the Father He has revealed to our hearts; namely, that He is a kind and merciful Father, that He receives us into His grace; pardoning all our sins, delivering us from death and the devil, defending and bringing us help in all perils and straits, and that without any regard to our works or merits, but only of His fatherly goodness through Jesus Christ His beloved Son. He that praises, glories in, and preaches, believes and confesses these things, makes the Father glorious, and magnifies and manifests His name, that men may know what He is to be called, how He is to be looked upon, and how he is to be worshiped. *Unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world.* As no one manifests the name of the Father, or permits it to be preached, but Himself; so no one can understand or apprehend that manifestation but those who are given unto Him. Others are offended at it, and even dispute it; and with such wickedness are they filled, that they even persecute and blaspheme it. For it makes directly against all their wisdom and sanctity, and against all those things upon which they pride themselves. But those who are called and have come to a partaking of the Gospel, and to this manifestation, that is, to the Word of Christ, so as to embrace it seriously, that is, to be inwardly persuaded of it, and to believe it, are certainly those who were given unto Christ by the Father out of the world. And those who were given unto Him, those He will safely guard, and will take care that not one of them shall perish.

Thou art the Way; to Thee alone
From sin and death we flee;
And he who would the Father seek,
Must seek Him, Lord, by Thee.

October 19

Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word. *John xvii. 6b.*

* * *

Thine they were, says Jesus. He who hears the Word, opens his heart and ears, and receives the manifestation concerning the Father no longer belongs to the world, but is Mine. And it is certain that they are Mine, and that I am their Lord, Master, and Savior, this also is certain, that they are also Thine, nor are they thine now only, but were Thine also from the beginning, and came now unto Thee by Me. Know this, that there is not in all the world a greater consolation than this which Christ here opens up and puts into your hands; namely, that you are God's and His beloved child, seeing that His Word is your pleasure, and your heart is sweetly devoted to Him. For if Christ is sweet to you, and your Friend, and comforts you, then God the Father Himself comforts you. Therefore you have not an angry God, but one full of fatherly love and grace. *And Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word.* Here He binds both in one bond—that they are both the children of the Father and the portion of Christ. They are My disciples (says He), and yet they were Thine from all eternity. And how are they known to be so? Because "they have kept Thy Word." Why does He not say, rather, they have kept My Word? Christ wishes to make the Father and Himself one, and to draw Himself wholly unto the Father, and speaks as though He would say: "In that they are My disciples and hear Me, they hear and keep not My Word but Thine." From which we are certain that no words proceed out of the mouth of Christ but those of our heavenly Father.

Divine Instructor, gracious Lord!
Be Thou forever near;
Teach me to love Thy sacred Word,
And view my Savior there.

October 20

Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. *John xvii. 7.*

* * *

All these things are intended only to raise up our fearful and heavy conscience, and to lighten and gladden our heart, that it might not fear to draw near unto God. Having the Word (saith He), and keeping it, they know that all things whatsoever I have to do, perform, and give, are from Thee; that is, they receive them as given and freely bestowed by Thee, and doubt not that they are chosen by Thee, and drawn unto Me. For all who are united unto Me by faith, and hear Me, know for a certainty that Thou art their Father and their merciful and propitious God. For they could neither hear Me nor keep My Word, unless Thou Thyself hadst given it unto them and hadst chosen them unto it. And this is the fruit of the Word where it is received and kept; for through the benefits of it, we attain unto the knowledge of all the graces and heavenly blessings which are given unto us of the Father by Christ; on which we may rest with a happy and assured mind. And that is what no human reason or wisdom, no, nor even the doctrine of the law can effect. And this is that true and blessed light and glory whereby we behold God with open face without any veil and covering, as Paul says *(II Cor. iii.)*.

'Who shall the Lord's elect condemn?
'Tis God who justifies their souls;
And mercy, like a mighty stream,
O'er all their sins divinely rolls.

He lives! He lives! and sits above,
Forever interceding there:
Who shall divide us from His love,
Or what should tempt us to despair?

October 21

> For I have given unto them the Words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. *John xvii. 8.*

* * *

In these words lies the whole force of the matter. Behold how plainly He speaks of the external Word, which is pronounced by the corporal voice through Christ, and received by the ear; that no one might set this at nought, or consider it as unnecessary. For here you hear of no other means or way than the Word, which Christ has spread abroad by His living preaching. And He declares that its power is such, and that it produces such fruits, that by it we know the mind and will of the Father, and have in it all things that are necessary to our salvation. *And they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me.* The effect of the Word of God, where it is seriously received, is such, that we may know that Christ came forth from, and was sent by, the Father; that is, that all things whatsoever He saith are the words and will of the Father, and all that He does and works, the work and command of the Father; and that all these things together are for our help. This is the knowledge in which eternal life stands. This is knowledge, however, which is entirely hidden from the world and to which no human reason or wisdom can attain; nor is it attainable by any other means or in any other way than through the Word of Christ. But we must look to it again and again, that we hold the Word fast, rejecting all other thoughts whatever, and that we suffer ourselves to hear and know nothing else concerning God but that which Christ speaks.

Father of mercies, in Thy Word
What endless glory shines!
Forever be Thy name adored
For these celestial lines.

October 22

I pray for them: I pray not for the world.
John xvii. 9a.

* * *

Here He pours forth His prayer indeed, and shows why He labors so much—that it is for His Christians. He now commends them to the Father, as those by whom or through whom He is to be glorified, that He would protect them in the world, together with those who could come after them. We may say with assured faith and conclude, that to all certainty those for whom Christ prayed will be defended against all rage and fury of the devil, and against all sins and temptations of every kind. And here we hear with open ears for whom He prays: for those who receive His Word and follow after Him with all their heart. But on the other hand, it is terrible to hear what He then adds: *I pray not for the world.* Here then let us look to it with all our soul, that we be not found in that multitude for whom Christ disdained to pray. But how does this accord, that he refuses to pray for the world, when He Himself, Matt. v. 5, has taught us to pray even for our enemies? To pray for the world and not to pray for the world are each right and good. There is this difference. For His Christians and all that shall be converted, He prays that they may remain in a right faith, and go on and prosper therein, and never depart from it; and that those who are not in the faith may turn from their former life and come unto it. But as the state of the world now is, raging as it does so furiously and tumultuously against the Gospel, it never in any way entered into His mind to pray that such madness might please God, or that He should knowingly and designedly overlook and permit such a combined armament, but that He would oppose their furious attempts, and frustrate their impious designs.

Those haughty spirits, Lord, restrain,
Who o'er Thy Church with might would reign,
And always set forth something new,
Devised to change Thy doctrine true.

October 23

But for them which Thou hast given Me, for they are Thine. *John xvii. 9b.*

* * *

Here He again repeats the afore-cited words, that He might impress this the more forcibly upon us. I cannot (He says) pray for the world, for they are not Thine, but persecute with hatred and bitterness those whom Thou hast given Me. But I pray for these, because they are Thine inheritance and possession. These are My care and concern. I have already abundantly shown why He thus expresses Himself in these words, "them which Thou hast given Me." For he that is Christ's is the Father's also. And they are Christ's, as He Himself declares, who receive the Word from Him and keep it. And this is the most certain evidence of the Father also being merciful and appeased. For no one, as I have often repeated, embraces the Word, nor will keep it, who is not a child of God and given unto Christ by the Father. Therefore our greatest care ought to be, that we suffer not the devil to pluck us away from the Word. For against this Word the devil watches with all his thoughts and powers. Hence, he who desires to hold fast this, and whose whole care and prayers are directed to that one thing, for him is this consolation contained in the prayer of Christ, that he shall hold it fast, and that all the attempts of the devil shall be frustrated and in vain.

Word of the ever-living God,
Will of His glorious Son;
Without Thee how could earth be trod,
Or heaven itself be won?

October 24

And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine.
John xvii. 10a.

* * *

This is indeed speaking plainly and copiously. But it would not have been sufficient had He only said: "All Mine are Thine." For this anyone can say, that all that we have is God's. But this is far greater when Christ inverts it and says again: *And all Thine are Mine.* This no creature can say before God. And these words are not only to be understood concerning that which the Father gave Him in the world, but concerning that one divine essence which is common to Himself with the Father. He does not speak with respect to His disciples and Christians only, but He embraces at once all things that the Father possesses, namely, His eternal and omnipotent essence, life, truth, righteousness, etc. That is, He openly confesses that He is the true God. For these words, "All Thine," leave nothing not included. And we are not to forget the reason why Christ uses this Word "all," and what He intends thereby. By this word "all," He would address Himself to those who cleave unto His Word. And therefore, He admonishes us to abide by Him, and to know that God speaks, works, and bestows all things by Him, and that all the words and all the works of God are to be sought in Him. In other words, you can see and hear nothing in Christ without seeing and hearing the Father at the same time.

Yea, Lord, Thy servants meet Thee,
E'en now, in every place
Where Thy true Word hath promised
That they should see Thy face.
Thou yet wilt gladly grant us,
Who gather round Thee here,
In faith's strong arms to bear Thee,
As did that aged seer.

October 25

And I am glorified in them. *John xvii. 10b.*

* * *

Consider not this a light or trifling consolation, that Christ glories before the Father that this work is wrought in us, that He is glorified in us. Nor is this honor to be changed by us for the riches and dignity of the whole world, that He desires to be glorified through the weakness of our flesh and blood; and that it so pleases God the Father, and is a matter of such consideration with Him, that Christ is praised and magnified by us. For there are by no means a small number who boast of the Gospel and know how to prate a great deal about it, but this glorifying is not so common. For to glorify Christ and to believe in Him, is nothing more or less than, as I have said, to be fully persuaded that he who has Christ has the Father also, together with all grace, all heavenly blessings, and life eternal. Of this the saints of this world know nothing. For although many speak of Christ and imitate our words, that He is the Son of God by those whose benefits we are delivered, yet they never learn and experience how He is to be received, made use of, sought, found, and held fast, or how the Father is to be apprehended through Him; but are all the while with Socrates soaring aloft in their vain thoughts and speculations.

My Savior, I behold Thee
Now with the eye of faith;
No foe of Thee can rob me,
Though bitter words he saith.
Within Thy heart abiding,
As Thou dost dwell in me,
No pain, no death has terrors
To part my soul from Thee.

October 26

> And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. *John xvii. 11a.*

* * *

Jesus had given two reasons why He prayed for them. The one, where He says: "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me," that is, Thou hast taken them out of the world into Thy kingdom, possession, grace, and protection. The other, because (says He) "I am glorified in them," that is, they praise Me and confess Me to be He who has all things that are Thine. Now he adds a third reason: Because He is going from them, and about to leave them in the world behind Him in the midst of all perils, persecutions, and bitterness. For when He says, "I am no more in the world," He speaks as One who is just about to depart and die, and to be totally separated from the world. Christ evidently enters upon another life, which He calls going to the Father. How comes it to pass that Christ says, "I come to Thee," when He must (as God) still be in the world? "In the world" means to be in this external and sensible state, that is, to enjoy this life which the world enjoys, which is called the natural life. Therefore He no longer lives a life after the manner of this world. And if He is gone to the Father, then He must of necessity be wherever the Father is. But the Father is everywhere, both in heaven and out of heaven, in the earth and in all creatures.

> Since Christ has reached His glorious throne,
> And mighty gifts henceforth are His,
> My heart can rest in heaven alone,
> On earth my Lord I always miss;
> I long to be with Him on high,
> My heart and thoughts forever fly
> Where is my only Treasure.

October 27

Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me. *John xvii. 11b.*

* * *

In these words He explains what He prays for, namely, that the Father would receive them as commended to Him while He should be gone and should leave them alone in the world, and would preserve them as He had preserved them when present with them. And when He says "Holy Father!" it proceeds from the utmost fervor of His most ardent heart. It is as though He had said: "O, dear Father, keep them from all false doctrine, that they might persevere in Thy holy Word and in the pure Gospel, whereby they are sanctified, and might not depart from it, nor fall into an outward sanctity. For unless Thou preserve them, all is over with their salvation." *Whom Thou hast given Me,* that is, as we have before observed, "who have My Word"; which He continually repeats and cannot forget. Therefore, what He would say is this: Since Thou hast given them unto Me for this end, that they might become My disciples, and be called to true holiness, grant, O Father, that they may be preserved therein, and be defiled by no one, nor be led aside and corrupted by any error.

Thy noblest wonders here we view,
In souls renewed, and sins forgiven;
Lord, cleanse our sins, our souls renew,
And make Thy Word our guide to heaven.

October 28

That they may be one, as We are. *John xvii. 11c.*

* * *

Christ is here to be understood thus: Christians ought to be so intimately united as to be altogether one thing, and to remain one undivided body, even as He and the Father are "one." Between these there is not only the same mind and will, but their whole indivisible essence is the same. For if Christ be separated from the Father, one God can no longer exist, but a divided, separate, and distinct essence, though the union of the divine essence is much greater than that of the members in one body, and it is impossible for us to comprehend it. In the same manner Christ would also say: My Christians ought to be one flock, that is, one whole undivided body. Though there is here an union different from that of nature, namely, a spiritual union. Yet it is called being "one," because therein the one cannot exist without the other, and if one part be taken away, it can no longer be called one thing, or "one." From this union the body is called Christianity, and a communion of the saints (not a mere sameness), in which all the saints or Christians are one multitude, and "body," and "lump." The Christian therefore has this confidence: He is certain that when the devil opposes and attacks him, it is not he alone that is attacked, a finger only, but the whole body at the same time; that is, all Christians throughout the whole world, and so God Himself and Christ.

Yet she (the Church) on earth hath union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won;
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and holy,
On high may dwell with Thee.

October 29

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy name. *John xvii. 12a.*

* * *

That is, as long as they heard and saw Me, and conversed corporally with Me, I kept them in Thy Word, by teaching, by admonishing, by urging, by comforting, by exhorting, and by instructing them in every way, that they might not by any means be drawn aside from the knowledge of the Word. And now, as I am no more in the world, that is, as they will hereafter have no more conversation with me corporally, and will neither see nor hear me more, it remains that Thou take the care of preserving them upon Thyself, that they may persevere in the Word as they have begun; for they have Thy Word and are Thine.

Hark! the Church proclaims her honor,
And her strength is only this:
God hath laid her choice upon her,
And the work she doth is His.

He His Church has firmly founded,
He will guard what He began;
We by sin and foes surrounded,
Build her bulwarks as we can.

Frail and fleeting are our powers,
Short our days, our foresight dim,
And we own the choice not ours,
We were chosen first by Him.

October 30

> Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled. *John xvii. 12b.*

* * *

I have kept them, that they might not be shaken or deceived by any false doctrine or holiness; and with such watchfulness have I kept them, that not one of them has perished but Judas, that son of perdition. And wherefore? Because he never clave to Me from his heart, nor embraced My Word seriously; but followed Me only that he might, under the cover of My name, and by being with Me, heap to himself riches. But such a child of the devil as this was to be borne with in the presence and intimate society of Christ that that Scripture might be fulfilled which predicted that there should always be such Judases to be borne with by His disciples; even as Jesus Himself also cites these words from the 41st Psalm: "He that eateth bread with Me, hath lifted up his heel against Me" *(John xiii. 18)*. Judas, therefore, is a type of all those who by the Gospel seek their own gain; of which kind there are not a few at this day, who boast themselves indeed in the Gospel, and yet seek nothing but the glory of their own name, ease, and speculation. Of such, therefore, Christ takes an eternal farewell, denying that they are His disciples. Therefore, He says, I cannot preserve them, but I must permit them to abuse the sanction of My name in which they boast themselves, although they have no desire to be Christians.

A book is opened then to all
A record truly telling
What each hath done, both great and small,
When he on earth was dwelling;
And every heart be clearly seen,
And all be known as they have been,
In thoughts and words and actions.

October 31

> And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. *John xvii. 13.*

* * *

After I had called them together and implanted in them My Word, Jesus says, I preserved them so long by my corporal presence until the Word had taken root and abode in them, so that it might by them be spread abroad more widely. And I was for this cause with them, that I might lay the foundation of this, and might obtain for them all those things which they, together with all Christians, should have need of. and should want to receive. But now the time is at hand that I must come again unto Thee and receive My kingdom and make that known by having the Word spread abroad among all nations. Therefore I commend these unto Thee, and I come unto Thee for this cause, that Thou mightest strengthen and guard them by Thy Holy Spirit and by Thy divine power. *And these things I speak in the world* as a testimony of My commendation of them to Thee, that they might hear how I pray for them that they may be under Thy sure care and protection; so that, by relying thereon, they might most surely believe that they will never be forsaken of Thee, even though the whole world, with all the devils together, should rage against them with all their fury. *That they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves*, that is, that they might have consolation through the Word which they have heard with their ears, and have held fast in their minds; and that, being thereby gladdened, they might say, behold, Christ my Lord said this, He has thus faithfully prayed for me from His heart, I have heard from His mouth that He will defend and preserve me by the omnipotent and eternal power and might of His Father.

> He lives, my kind, wise, heavenly Friend,
> He lives and loves me to the end;
> He lives, and while He lives, I'll sing;
> He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King!

November 1

I have given them Thy Word. *John xvii. 14a.*

* * *

In these words He again intimates what goodness they shall experience in the world, that they might see how much they will stand in need of this consolation contained in the Word, and of that joy which is given unto them of Christ. And He more fully explains that which He had explained before: that the Word which He has given them is the Word of the Father, calling it "Thy Word," and for this end: that they might have no further occasion to desire or seek any other consolation, and that they might give all diligence to magnify that Word, love it, and prize it as the greatest treasure they have upon earth, and as given unto them as a joy and consolation against all adversities. There is (says He) no other treasure that I can give them but the Word which I received from Thee, and which I brought down from heaven with Me. This I have given unto them; and I have with such diligence taught it them because I wish them to feel in their hearts that they have My solid, perfect, and eternal joy with them; and to be enabled to say after My death: "Here I have the Word of Christ, my Lord, yea, the Word of His Omnipotent Father; by keeping of which I am sure that no power upon earth nor any gates of hell can hurt Me; for He holds me in His omnipotent hand, and defends me with His paternal protection, away from which the violence of no one can ever pluck me. He accompanies His Word with His love, and has determined to hold it fast in all things, and He will by the same power defend and protect all those who desire and love it." And this is wholly necessary, for we poor creatures greatly need this protection.

He lives to bless me with His love,
He lives to plead for me above,
He lives my hungry soul to feed,
He lives to help in time of need.

November 2

And the world hath hated them. *John xvii. 14b.*

* * *

Here our character, and the true mark of Christians by which they are signalized in the world, are descriptively set forth. If you desire to be a disciple of Christ, and if you love His Word, then do not be ashamed of this mark, but be content to have the world your enemy. For you will find that, not strangers and wicked and abandoned men only, but your best and most intimate friends, honorable and worthy men, and also men revered and respected by the world for their sanctity, will turn against you and plot your destruction, or will traduce you and lay snares for you from every quarter. And yet there will be nothing of which they can accuse you, or which they can lay to your charge, no vice of which they can condemn you, either of having defrauded anyone, or hurt him, or in any way injured him, but only that you love, hold, cherish, confess, and preach the Word of Christ. The world knows how to wink at, to pardon, to cover with a good grace, and to excuse all crimes; it knows how to extend its benevolence to all kinds of enormities, by opening its doors, by toleration, by pity, by affording relief. But Christians the earth cannot endure; so that he who persecutes, condemns, and punishes them with death is endowed with the most exalted virtues, does God the highest service, and confers a benefit on his country, as Christ says in John, chapter 16. Therefore these words are most expressive: "The world hath hated them." As though Jesus would have said: The world has nothing else to do but to persecute Christians with its hatred.

Be of good cheer; your cause belongs
To Him who can avenge your wrongs;
Leave it to Him, our Lord.
Though hidden yet from mortal eyes,
His Gideon shall for you arise,
Uphold you and His Word.

November 3

Because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. *John xvii. 14c.*

* * *

In the catalogue of those whom the world hates, I also am to be numbered (says Jesus) and to be put first upon the list. And therefore My disciples will not have a better lot than I had; for if they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how shall they pay more respect to His disciples and to them of His household? But the world, as it appears to itself, has just causes for persecuting me with hatred; nor can I be in favor with it when I am forced to show unto it its blindness and misery, and to reprove the folly of its wisdom and outside show of sanctity, which is accounted nought before God. Not that My design is to hurt them, or to do them any injury, but to bring them help, and rescue their miserable and captive souls from the jaws of the devil, and lead them unto God. This the devil cannot bear, and therefore it is that he so much storms and rages, stirring up and exasperating their minds against Me and My Word. And the world cannot depart from its blindness and presumption, nor patiently suffer its deeds and whole life to be condemned and accounted nought. Therefore (says Christ), "I have given them Thy Word," that they may rejoice and delight in this against all the ignominy and contempt of the happy world, and that thus they may with a gladdened mind despise all its favor and applause, and account it nought; yea, may avoid and shun it by all possible means, and have nothing to do with it.

Fear not, O little flock, the foe
Who madly seeks your overthrow;
Dread not his rage and power:
What though your courage sometimes faints,
His seeming triumph o'er God's saints
Lasts but a little hour.

November 4

I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world. *John xvii. 15a.*

* * *

I pray not that they might go with Me out of the world, for not a few things remain to be accomplished by Me through them; namely, that they may extend My kingdom, and make My flock more numerous. They have received the Word from Me, but as My counsels will not permit Me to remain longer in the world, there are many yet to be converted by them, and to be brought, through their Word, to believe on Me; for their sakes, therefore, I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, though the world cannot endure their presence, and they, on the other hand, have had enough of the world and nauseate it. And this is the reason why Christians, and especially ministers, ought to desire a longer life. The devil and the world are our greatest enemies and afflict us with every kind of plague: such and so base are the ingratitude and contempt of malignant men, and so horrible is their blasphemy, and their persecution of the Word of God. And therefore, nothing would be more desirable than if God should take us out of the world at our first outset, and thus prevent us from being compelled to see and hear such wickedness, ingratitude and blasphemy. But why should this be? There is ever a small company who are daily in jeopardy in manifold ways, and we must watch and labor that these be not torn away from the Gospel, nor must that care be omitted as long as we live. For it is a laborious and arduous task, with all our labors, devotedness, and diligence, to keep the Word among a few.

Who shall to Israel's outcast race
From Zion bring salvation?
God will Himself at length show grace
And loose the captive nation;
That will He do by Christ their King;
Let Jacob then be glad and sing,
And Israel be joyful.

November 5

But that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil.
John xvii. 15b.

* * *

Afflictions and perils we must endure in the world for the Word's sake, both from tyrants and from sects, which will assail us on all sides; the one with false doctrines, the other with all the bitterness of persecution, and both leaving no stone unturned that the world may be torn from us. And, in addition to this, we live surrounded with so powerful an army of devils, that we are like one poor lost solitary sheep in the midst of wolves; yea rather, we live in the midst of the most furious and roaring lions (as Peter says), who are all gnashing their teeth at us, and ready to grind us to pieces with their jaws and to swallow us up. And, tell me, who is it that preserves us in such a perilous state of things, so as to enable us to stand in the midst of such a multitude of the most deadly and cruel enemies? Who is it that keeps us from being cast down in our minds, from despairing every moment, and from losing both the Word and faith together? Who is it that at such times as these defends us against the power of our tyrants, and against the inveterate malice of the devil? No human power or wisdom has hitherto protected us. The guardian of our safety sitteth above, who, mindful of this prayer, saith: My Christ once prayed for them, and for this cause they are to be kept and defended by Me. And this is our trust, protection, and defence, which prevents our enemies from fulfilling the desire of their mind in afflicting us, though they should burst with the overwhelming rage of their furious though impotent mind, or though they should persecute us in vain till the minds are tired out, for God will rescue us from their teeth.

Though united world and devil,
All their power can no more
Do than mock and cavil.
Let derision now employ them,
Christ e'en here will appear
And 'fore all destroy them.

November 6

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. *John xvii. 16.*

* * *

This is that on which our whole consolation rests. And therefore it is that He repeats it so many times, and by that means touches the heart and thoughts of His disciples. For what He would say is this: You feel and complain that you must yet remain in the world, which cannot endure you and which loads you with every evil, so that you are every hour in peril of your salvation. I know this full well. But you ought to be content with this consolation, that they will never have power over you, and that you will never be left in their hands, because you are not theirs but the Father's. Take of the world an eternal farewell, who belong to their own god, the devil, for you shall have even in the midst of your afflictions from a raging world, a sure protection, being so guarded as to have no part of the world whatever. And when God shall see a fit time, He shall deliver you, and take you out of the way of that destruction that shall overwhelm the wicked.

Satan, I defy Thee;
Death, I need not fly Thee;
Fear, I bid thee cease!
Rage, O world, thy noises
Cannot drown our voices
Singing still of peace.
For God's power guards every hour;
Earth and all its depths adore Him,
Silent bow before Him.

November 7

Sanctify them through Thy truth. *John xvii. 17a.*

* * *

Jesus here presses still one thing more; yet whatever He asks pertains to the Word only. He does not say: If it is Thy will to defend them from afflictions, then cause them to run away into some desert, or to hide themselves in some monastery; but: Defend them that they may remain sanctified, and that *through Thy truth,* which is true and pure sanctification. What the devil aims at with his might is to introduce by the leaders of his sects that doctrine which carries with it the greatest show and the most plausible appearance of truth and sanctity. He does not attack us with temptations to gross and fleshly sins, knowing that all such endeavors would be in vain, and that he would thereby gain no victory at all. But, seeing that all our strivings and endeavors are directed to the attainment of holiness, he sets that holiness only before us, that he might furnish us with help in the acquirement of it; and with such splendor does he adorn and set off this holiness that no human power can overcome it, but we are deceived and caught by its appearance, imagining it to be real. Therefore we must without intermission strive against false holiness. Jesus prays: O dearest Father, defend them from all outward show of holiness, and sanctify them in truth. And to be sanctified in truth is what Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 4, calls "being created in righteousness and true holiness." Hence Christ, and Paul likewise, say that there are many who have the praise and honor of holiness, but their holiness is all in outward show.

Fictions they teach with cunning art,
And lies of man's invention;
Not grounded on God's Word, their heart
Breeds naught but strange dissension;
One chooses this, another that,
Untold division they create
Though saintlike in appearance.

November 8

Thy Word is truth. *John xvii. 17b.*

* * *

You wish to know for a certainty and infallibly what true and real holiness is, that you may be able to distinguish it from all others; then look at the Word only, and suffer not yourself to be deceived by any false show. For the Word is a true touchstone whereby real holiness is distinguished and discovered; more than that, the Word itself is that alone which truly sanctifies. Whatever is not the Word, or to be proved by the Word, is not holiness, but falsity, profanity, frivolity, and a thing of nought. We are to hear the Word from the mouth of Christ only. He that hears and believes His Word has rightly the truth of God which sanctifies, without any hypocritical show. For if you believe His Word, then you can hold fast no hope or confidence in your own reason and wisdom, nor in your own strength and works. Unfeigned humility always follows where there is unfeigned faith. And true patience and love to the brethren always follow upon true humility. You will know the tree by its fruits, and also who they are who have and hold the Word of Christ. True holiness is nothing else but a true faith in the Word of Christ, which the Father first freely gives, from which all kinds of good fruits proceed. We openly and freely confess before the whole world, and in the face of all devils and sects, that there is no life, no good works, no spiritual and sublime cogitations, nor any self-forced devotion that can make men saints. In a word, there is nothing in us from which holiness can proceed.

O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by many a foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of poverty or woe.

November 9

> As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. *John xvii. 18.*

* * *

In these words you hear why Christ prays the Father to sanctify them; namely, that He might set them apart and send them forth into the world to preach the Gospel. And by these words Christ creates His apostles, and forms them into teachers and preachers, making all of us to be their disciples, and subjecting us all to their mouth, whether learned or unlearned, that every one might humble himself, with how much wisdom, learning, and genius soever he may be endued, and that all might suffer those simple fishermen to be their masters and teachers, and hear them as they would hear Christ the Lord. *As Thou hast sent Me into the world* is no common saying, it is no trifling matter to believe that Christ was sent into the world by the Father; that is, to be fully persuaded in your conscience and undoubtingly to believe that when you hear the words that proceed out of the mouth of Christ, you hear the Father speak unto you from heaven. What is there in all things human and divine which anyone should desire more ardently than to hear God Himself speaking? Here then is given to you the surest testimony, that he who hears the Word of Christ hears the Word of Him who made heaven and earth by His Word. And this same thing is here testified concerning the mouths and preachings of the apostles. *Even so have I also sent them into the world.* That is, as they have heard *Me*, so also are they to be heard by all My future disciples. This is the same also as that He said unto them in another place: "He that heareth you heareth Me."

> Make them Apostles! Heralds of Thy cross;
> Forth may they go to tell all realms Thy grace;
> Inspired of Thee, may they count all but loss,
> And stand at last with joy before Thy face.

November 10

And for their sakes I sanctify Myself. *John xvii. 19a.*

* * *

This also Jesus adds that He might again strike at hypocrites and pretenders to holiness. For, after He had prayed that the Father would sanctify them through the Word, someone may perhaps ask: What Word is that which offers and brings unto us sanctification? It certainly cannot be the Ten Commandments. Though they are the Word of God, and though they are holy, they cannot give that sanctification of which we are here speaking, which makes us saints before God; nor can we by our own powers fulfill what they require of us; neither can they purify the heart even when those external works are performed. Christ here uses that term "sanctified" out of the Old Testament. Under Moses they were said to be sanctified who brought their sacrifices, and sacrificed oxen or sheep, or wheat, or flour, or wine, or brought any other thing of the same kind, which, when the priest took them into his hand were no longer common things, but were said to be offered to the Lord and sanctified. But My Christians (says Christ) have need of another sacrifice whereby they might be sanctified truly; and this shall be done by My sacrificing Myself for them. These words are not to be understood as signifying that Christ had need to be sacrificed, as one that was not sanctified before; for He was holy from the womb of His mother. But to "sanctify" in this place signifies to discharge and perform the office of priest. I will offer a holy sacrifice and perform the office of priest. And what shall that be? I will "sanctify Myself"; that is, I will be the offering and the victim. I sacrifice Myself as a holy sacrifice, and that for them.

Jesus the sacrifice became
To rescue guilty souls from hell;
The spotless, bleeding, dying Lamb,
Beneath avenging justice fell.

November 11

That they also might be sanctified through the truth. *John xvii. 19b.*

* * *

How eloquently and clearly Christ speaks concerning real sanctification, in order to instruct us, that we may not err from the true sanctification; moreover, that we might take care that we teach no other sanctification than His, nor think of seeking satisfaction in any other way. For He well knew how laborious a struggle this would be, and how many temptations would attend it; how it is engendered in us (even in us who are Christians) to seek after something in ourselves, or something we are to do, in order to become sanctified. Therefore He appends with so much care the words: "Through the truth," and opposes that to all the false and worldly confidence that is placed in human and natural sanctification. My sanctification (says He) causes them to be sanctified in truth. Then, if this be true, you may easily conclude that all other things and means whereby we impiously pretend to become sanctified before God, are to be accounted vain and damnable. For these two things cannot stand together: that the blood of Christ should sanctify and that our professions and works should procure satisfaction. Where there is a right faith, which believes that the sanctification of Christ alone avails before God and becomes our sanctification, that faith sanctifies all our works; they are not sanctified from any respect to our merit, but for that faith's sake from which they flowed, without which no works, no life, can please God. Scripture honors them with the appellation of saints who hear and receive the Word, though they be yet in flesh and blood.

My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine!
Now hear me while I pray;
Take all my guilt away;
O let me from this day
Be wholly Thine.

November 12

> Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their Word. *John xvii. 20.*

* * *

We ought to write this text in letters of gold, because it belongs particularly to us. Christ makes mention of us Gentiles also; nay, He embraces in this His prayer all Christianity, even unto the last day, that its power may extend everywhere wherever the Word of the Apostles should come, and wherever it should be received by faith, no place or person being excluded. And this is our hope, our confidence, and our greatest treasure. This text is moreover diligently to be marked for the manner in which Christ has therein extolled and praised the preaching of the Apostles, by which it is that we are brought unto Him, and by which we believe in Him. These words: *which shall believe* (which is a work of the heart and of the internal man) and, *through their Word* are to be joined together. For he is called the internal man who believeth and has all his heart's confidence and hope fixed in God alone. Faith is no work of the body but of the internal recess of the heart. And Christ says that they shall believe, that is, that they shall become internal or spiritual men, *through the Word of the Apostles.* And although *all* do not believe, yet there are many believers. Christ Himself does not say that all shall believe. But we know that some who hear the Word believe, which can be proved and made evident from many testimonies and examples of the Scripture. Therefore we conclude that the Word is necessary and profitable, not to the ears only, but to the heart and to the inward man, and that the Word is the medium through which faith is communicated to the mind.

> Let every ear attend,
> And every heart rejoice;
> The trumpet of the Gospel sounds
> With an inviting voice.

November 13

That they all may be one. *John xvii. 21a.*

* * *

He that believeth through the Word of the apostles, to him are given the grace and virtue of this prayer. He, together with all Christians, forms the body of Christ; so that, whatever grief or whatever good happens unto him as a member of the body, the same grief or good happens unto the whole body: nor does this or that saint only, but all the prophets, martyrs, Apostles, and all Christians in the world together, and those who are with God, suffer with Him, conquer with him, fight for him, and help, defend, and uphold him. And what greater blessing can come upon anyone than to be brought into this communion and fraternity, and to be made a member of this body, which is called Christianity, a body of such a nature that God has united to it Himself, with all His infinite blessings. It is an high, all-powerful mistress and queen of heaven and earth, at whose feet the world, the devil, death, and hell must fall prostrate as soon as the Word is spoken. And who can hurt the man that has this confidence, and that knows that when he suffers the least grief all heaven and earth, with all the saints and angels, cry out against his oppressors! And if he be assaulted by sin, which wishes to terrify, gnaw, and press upon his conscience and to threaten him with death and hell, God immediately, with all the assembly of the elect, says: Sin shall not gnaw you, nor shall hell swallow you up. But to arrive at this there must be faith.

Make us to hear in each sweet Word
Thy Holy Spirit calling
To oneness with Thy Church and Thee,
That heavenly bond forestalling

November 14

As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us. *John xvii. 21b.*

* * *

Jesus here presents to us Himself and the Father as an example and a similitude, that He might thereby declare unto us that unity wherein He desires us to be united. "And I and the Father are one" (He says) —the same divine essence and majesty. According to this example all should be one, and one solely in Us; we should be so one body that all may have whatever we possess. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature," as Peter says, Second Epistle, chapter 1. And although the Father and Christ are one in the divine essence in a more sublime way than we can comprehend, yet we have this blessing, that we enjoy the benefits of it. Moreover, these words are also spoken for our consolation and stay against the world and the devil. For although he should attack any one weak member of the Christian body, or make an assault on all Christianity together, yet he is compelled to bear and feel that he has not attacked us only but Christ Himself, and not Christ only, but the Father also; that is, the omnipotent and eternal Majesty. We are so united that you can hold no Christian in contempt, offer an insult to none, persecute none, injure none, and, on the contrary, you can honor none, do a kindness to none, without doing it to God Himself. For God has given all things into this His Christ, and Christ has given them all to His Christians, and all are connected together as the links of a chain.

One Baptism and one faith have we,
One Spirit sent to win us,
One Lord, one Father, and one God,
Above, and through, and in us.
Never, by schism, or by sin,
May we that union sever,
Till all, to perfect stature grown,
Are one with Thee forever.

November 15

That the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. *John xvii. 21c.*

* * *

This is the fruit that follows from such an union; namely, that the Word of Christ breaks forth, and being spread far and wide throughout the world, is there received as the Word of God; in which are contained an almighty, divine, and invincible power, and a never-failing fountain of all grace and blessedness. This is the most excellent of all knowledge, which is so deeply hidden and so rare, and which can never be fully learned; and therefore it is that Christ makes mention of hardly anything else, and repeats it in almost every word He speaks. For it never entered into the mind and heart of any man that he should account all his own things naught that he either knows or can do, and should creep into the righteousness, sanctification, and wisdom of Christ, as contained in, and made known by, the weak preaching of His Word. Wherefore I admonish the more diligently that we studiously learn and thoroughly weigh these words and the whole of this chapter, in which the sum of the whole Christian doctrine is so copiously and fully handled, and asserted in such powerful words; namely, that we have all things in Christ that we have need of, and have nothing in ourselves or in any other man, but all in Christ only. The words themselves indeed are common and simple, and this is the reason that the wise so negligently pass over and despise them.

From heaven above to earth I come
To bear good news to every home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
Whereof I now will say and sing.
This is the Christ, our God and Lord,
Who in all need shall aid afford;
He will Himself your Savior be,
From all your sins to make you free.

November 16

> And the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in Me. *John xvii. 22, 23a.*

* * *

Behold, what a length of time He dwells upon this same thing, and how much He desires us and persuades us to esteem it as the greatest and most necessary doctrine, which is the most full of consolation of all that are delivered to us. *I have given them (says He) My glory,* that is, a thing great and magnificent, exceeding all majesty and honor, and precious, not for the abundance of its riches and the profusion of its treasures only, but to be truly and sacredly praised and extolled. But what is that glory which Christ has and gives? Even that of which He spoke just before, "that they all may be one, as the Father and I are One." This is that excellent and precious treasure and fountain, that inexhaustible mine of all the divine benefits, life, consolation, and blessedness, if the man only believes. This faith, however, is not an idle empty cogitation, but a living, serious, consolatory, and undoubting confidence in the heart of the man that he shall obtain this glory whereby we are made one with Christ, and so, through Him, one with the Father also, and as Christ cannot be divided and separated from the Father, so no Christian member can be separated from Christ. But whence does this glory proceed whereby we are all made one in the Father and in Christ? It certainly does not proceed from our own merits, nor it is procured by human works and powers, but it is brought unto us, bestowed upon us, and freely given to us by Christ. By the Word we are all made one in one faith; and by that faith we become one spiritual body, although the works of each member are not the same. Faith collects and concentrates all the works and makes them one, so that all hearts together cling to the one Christ and the Father.

> The saints on earth and those above
> But one communion make;
> Joined to their Lord, in bonds of love,
> All of His grace partake.

November 17

That they may be made perfect in one. *John xvii. 23b.*

* * *

It is not enough (says Jesus) that they be one, but they must *be made perfect in one.* As though He had said, I have some Christians who must all be made and become one; but there is a deficiency, arising from many of them being yet weak. The unity of essence is indeed effected, but it stands only in faith; and as much as there is of faith, so much is there of perfection. Therefore He prays the Father that they may be made perfect, may grow more strong in their begun faith, and may be made one perfectly in Christ. In the same manner Paul also speaks *(Col. ii.)*: "Ye are complete in Him," that is, you have an overflowing abundance in Christ, nor have you need to seek anything more elsewhere. Hence he that has Christ is said to be perfect; that is, he has a full and perfect treasure of all the blessings that the mind can think worth craving or desiring, which are eternal life, righteousness, wisdom, and all divine blessings. Nor does such a man want anything, but to take heed and persevere in holding fast these things unto the end. The treasure is present with us, and collected together into one place, but the vessel is weak, for which cause we cannot hold it fast so perfectly as we ought; for we carry, as St. Paul says *(II Cor. iv.)*, "this treasure in earthen vessels." On that account, therefore, we are to labor daily in unceasing prayer, continual preaching, and much admonition, and to fight against all opposition and temptations, that we do not lose so great and precious a treasure, nor give the devil an occasion or opportunity of plucking it out of our hands, but that we take the more earnest heed to guard and hold it fast, and shun no peril for such a treasure's sake.

O watch, and fight, and pray,
The battle ne'er give o'er;
Renew it boldly every day,
And help divine implore.

November 18

> And that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me. *John xvii. 23c.*

* * *

There are two things that Jesus especially dwells on in this chapter. The one, that we who have come to the faith by the preaching of the Apostles, and those who shall be brought to the same faith daily, should by that faith become one. The other, that by this unity it might become known to the world that Christ was sent by the Father, and that we are loved by Him. For in these two things, namely, the Word and faith, stand the whole matter. And he that loses these, loses all; nor is there any counsel or help remaining for him. No moral probity can avail him anything. All works, and all life, however blamelessly spent, are vain. All unity is taken away, Christ is lost, and neither the knowledge of the Word nor of the Father can be attained unto. *And hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me.* This is what ought to flow from the knowledge of the Father and of the Word, that our hearts may with gladness and without a doubt, be enabled to say that we are the children of God and have a propitious Father. For it is the peculiar office of Christ to make us fully assured by His Word that we may promise to ourselves all the love and grace of God; even that love wherewith He loved Christ His only-begotten Son from the foundation of the world, that inestimable and eternal love, which is comprehensible by no heart of man. This is the wonderful and ineffable glory which is freely given us in Christ; but in the Word and faith only, until we get into the full enjoyment of it in the life to come.

> But now and ever, Lord protect
> The temple of Thine own elect;
> Be Thou in them, and they in Thee,
> O ever-blessed Trinity!

November 19

> Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am. *John xvii. 24a.*

* * *

This is the last, but of all the most consolatory, part of this prayer for all that depend on Christ, whereby we are rendered certain and assured of that which we are brought to expect; namely, that we shall have a rest, and sure and peaceable habitations and mansions, seeing that here in the world we are exiles and live in utter banishment, having no certain dwelling place. What Jesus would say is this: Be of good cheer. Let the devil and the world roar and rage against you, by destroying you, by burning you, and by exterminating you from off the face of the earth. There is one who holds a most watchful care over you, that you may arrive in safety in the place that you desire, where you shall be safe and secure from the world and all devils. And where is that place? *Where I am,* says He; that is, in the arms and bosom of the Father. This Scripture, therefore, we ought to use as a support and pillow for our souls, and securely resting thereon, be ready to depart with joy when the wished-for moment arrives, wherein we are to be delivered from every evil and be taken away into eternal rest. But it has already been more than once shown whom Christ means by these words: *Whom Thou hast given Me,* namely, us, who hold fast His Word, and especially when the storms of temptation increase, and when the world tries us and loads us with shame for the Word's sake. Then we ought boldly to take to ourselves these promises, although we be still sinners, filled with much weakness and covered with many defects.

> Jerusalem my happy home,
> Name ever dear to me,
> When shall my labors have an end
> In joy, and peace, and thee?

November 20

That they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. *John xvii. 24b.*

* * *

My Christians shall be brought to that state of felicity that they shall not only be where I am, but shall be brought into an open vision of My Glory. For here upon earth we know that glory by faith only, and do not see it, except "through a glass, darkly"; namely, as far as we hear it preached, and embrace it in our minds: that Christ arose from the dead, that He ascended into heaven, and sits in the majesty and glory of the Father, and is the one almighty Lord of all creatures. But in the life to come another light will shine, where we shall no more believe, nor preach, but shall be in the presence of Christ, and shall see Him openly before us, and be filled with joy and pleasure unspeakable. The magnitude of this glory is far above all sense, and far exceeds all human intellect, that we poor miserable creatures are to be brought to that place where we shall forever behold before our eyes so great and so unknown a majesty of the divine glory. Moreover, that our bodies shall, by the power of His glory, be made to shine in glory, far brighter than the sun and the stars. For all these things will the vision of this glory bring with it. *For Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.* They shall see this glory, that they may know that I am the Son, know Him not only as sent into the world and born of a virgin, but as Thine only Son whom Thou hast loved from the foundation of the world; that is, that I am equally with Thee the one God, and begotten from everlasting. For God could not love Him more than by giving Him an equal and eternal divinity.

Knowing as I am known,
How shall I love that word,
And oft repeat before the throne,
"Forever with the Lord!"

November 21

O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent me. *John xvii. 25.*

* * *

Jesus in this hour looked back upon the world, which would not by any means endure the Word, but raged the more against it the more it was preached. Whereas it ought to have been willing to run to the ends of the world to obtain such a Word, or to have sought it earnestly with bended knees, and not to have despised it ungratefully when thus gratuitously offered, nor to have returned its preachers every injury as their reward. Christ therefore is compelled to say, Thou art indeed a righteous God, and doest righteously and justly, in making that distinction between the world and those whom Thou hast given Me. *The world hath not known Thee,* nor does it wish to know Thee. I tell and deliver to them all things that pertain to the true knowledge of God; namely, that nothing avails with Thee but a sole and simple trust in Thy grace and goodness as freely given, and, moreover, that they have all things in Me. But they will neither patiently hear Me, nor My Word, asserting that what is declared by Me is nothing at all. They will have only their own wisdom, righteousness, and works to be available, and will approve themselves unto Thee by trusting in these. *But I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me.* That is, I am fully assured that I teach Thy Word as Thou wouldst be honored and believed on, that men may laud and praise Thee for Thy grace. My Christians, whom Thou hast given Me, receive that grace and goodness and know Thee thus: that Thou hast sent Me—in which the whole knowledge of the Father consists.

Jesus, our only Joy be Thou!
As Thou our Prize wilt be;
Jesus, be Thou our Glory now,
And through eternity!

November 22

> And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them. *John xvii. 25.*

* * *

I have given them Thy Word (Jesus says), by which they have become acquainted with Thy name: how Thou art named, what Thou art, and how Thou wilt be worshiped and honored. To know the Father is not only to know how He formed the heaven and the earth, how He helps the good, how He punishes the wicked; but that He sent His Son into the world and gave Him unto us, who has taken away death, and has procured for us reconciliation with the Father. This is the true name of God, which opens to us His mind and will, and discloses to us His paternal affection. But Christ adds: *And will declare it.* That is, I will not be content with having begun to manifest Thy name, but will go on to make it more manifest, and will urge the same unceasingly both by the Word and by the Spirit, that my Christians may not seek after anything else, or anything more great, but may be occupied in this one thing, that Thy name may become the more illustrious, and that they may the more firmly retain it in their minds. *That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* This, then, is the main thing to be attained unto; that we know the will and heart of the Father, here by the Word preached unto us, and hereafter, in the life to come, by open vision, whereby we shall behold how He loved us, and will love us forever, but through His Son Jesus Christ only. When we attain unto this, then shall we be in possession of the whole treasure of our consolation and salvation. Then shall we dwell in Him and He in us, so that we shall remain forever united in one.

O bliss! in Jesus' name I've tendered
My prayer; He pleads at Thy right hand for me,
Yea and Amen in Him is rendered
What I in faith and Spirit ask of Thee.
O joy for me! and praise be ever Thine
Whose wondrous love has made such blessings mine!

November 23

The Apostles' Creed

* * *

There are in the Apostles' Creed three heads: the three Persons of the Holy Trinity are therein enumerated. The first head refers to the Father, the second to the Son, and the third to the Holy Ghost. Now this article concerning the Holy Trinity is the most important of all the articles of the Christian faith, upon which all the other articles depend. We are first of all reminded that there are two ways of believing. The one, when I believe that God is, and know that those things are true which are said of the Turk, of the devil, or of hell. The other way of believing is when I believe in God: that is, when I not only believe that those things which are said of Him are true, but when I place all my trust and hope in Him, and so stay my mind upon Him as to have no doubt of His gracious goodwill toward me; and when I moreover believe that He will perform all those things in me which are gloriously said and proclaimed of Him. And this is the faith that is commanded in the first precept, when it is said: Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. And as this faith or trust of heart can be set in no one but in God, and yet, as this same faith and trust of heart are set in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Ghost also, it is a conclusive proof that Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost are of the one same divinity as God the Father. For as the same faith is set equally in all three Persons, they are therefore all of equal divinity.

O Trinity in Unity
One only God and Persons Three;
In whom, thro' whom, by whom we live,
To Thee we praise and glory give;
O grant us so to use Thy grace,
That we may see Thy glorious face,
And ever with the heavenly host
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

November 24

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

* * *

That is, I renounce all evil spirits, idolatries, magic arts, and everything that arises out of unbelief. I set my hope and trust in no man; not even in myself, my power, my learning, my wisdom, my righteousness, my fortune, nor anything that belongs to me. I trust in no creature either in heaven or in earth. I commit myself unto, and I believe in, the One invisible God only, the Maker of heaven and earth, and the Lord of all creatures. And I do not fear the arts and deceptions of all the evil spirits together; for my God is greater than them all, and they are all under His command. And though all men should forsake and even persecute me, nevertheless I have all my hope and confidence set in God. Nor shall my poverty, nor my ignorance, nor any want of righteousness, nor even the contempt of all, hinder me from believing. Nor shall my sins turn aside my faith. For my faith is far above all these things. Nor will I ask any signs of God, nor at all tempt Him by so doing. I trust steadily in Him, however long it may be before He fulfills all my desires. Nor will I set Him any limits, measure, or time. As He is the Creator and Lord of heaven, earth, and all things, who can hurt me or take anything from me? Moreover, as He is God, He knows how, and is able, to deal with me in that way which shall be best and the most to my profit. And as He is Father, His will is that my good should always be considered by Him. And as I rest all my hope and trust in Him, I am persuaded that I am His son and His servant, and that the inheritance shall come unto me. In a word, as I believe, so is it done unto me.

We all believe in one true God,
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Present Helper in all need,
Praised by all the heavenly host,
By whose mighty power alone
All is made, and wrought, and done.

November 25

THE APOSTLES' CREED

> And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.

* * *

Under this head we will, in the first part, treat of our belief concerning Jesus' Person and His humiliation. I believe that Jesus Christ is the true and only Son of God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, of the same eternal and divine nature and substance with God the Father; that the Father hath given all things into His power, and that with respect to His humanity also, He is Lord of all those things which He created together with the Father in His divinity. I believe that there is no way of access to the Father, nor any believing in Him, neither by learning, nor by works, nor by human reason, nor by any creature either in heaven or in earth, but by Jesus Christ, who is the only "way" by which we come unto the Father. I believe that He, for my sake, was conceived by the Holy Ghost, without any seed of man, that He might, through the mercy of Himself and the Father, beget us again entirely anew; that He was born of the Virgin Mary, by which means He purifies my condemned and sinful birth and that of all who believe in Him. I believe that He underwent His sufferings and the cross for my sins and the sins of all who believe, so that our sins now do not hinder our salvation, but His suffering brings us under His saving and all-full promises. I believe that He died and was buried that He might make an end of, and bury, my sins and the sins of all those who believe.

> Immortal honor to the Son,
> Who makes Thine anger cease;
> Our lives He ransomed with His own,
> And died to make our peace.

November 26

THE APOSTLES' CREED

He descended into hell. The third day He arose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

* * *

In this second part we will treat of our belief concerning Jesus' exaltation. I believe that Jesus descended into hell that He might overcome and subdue under Himself Satan, together with all his powers and devices, that he might have no more power to hurt me nor any other that believes, and that He might deliver me from the torments of hell. I believe that He rose again the third day from the dead for the salvation of me and all that believe, that we, being quickened by His Spirit and grace, might enter into a new life, serving Him alone in holiness of life and fulfilling His commandments. I believe that He ascended into heaven and received of the Father glory and power over all angels and creatures. I believe that He sits also at the right hand of God; that is, that He is made King and Lord over all the works of God that are in heaven, on earth, and in hell, and that He can therefore be at hand to succor me and all others who believe against all our adversaries and enemies. I believe that He shall come from thence in the last day to pronounce sentence both on the living who remain, and on the dead; that all men, all angels, and all devils, also, shall stand before His tribunal and behold Him face to face; and that these things shall be done in order to deliver me and all who believe from death and from all other calamities of every kind, and that He may take eternal vengeance on His adversaries, from whose tyranny we shall then be free forever.

He lives triumphant from the grave,
He lives eternally to save;
He lives all-glorious in the sky,
He lives exalted there on high.

November 27

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian Church, the communion of Saints; the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

* * *

That is, I believe that the Holy Ghost is God together with the Father and the Son, and that there is no way unto the Father through the life, suffering, and death of Christ, but by the leading and governing of the Holy Ghost. It is by Him that God the Father and the Son quicken, call, move, and draw me and all who believe. It is He who through Christ and in Christ gives us life, and sanctifies us that we may come unto the Father. It is this Spirit by whom the Father works all His works in us through and in Christ, and by whom He administers unto us life. I believe that there is but one holy Church of Christians throughout the whole world, that is, a company or united multitude of saints, or righteous and believing men, and that the same is gathered together, sanctified, and governed by the same Holy Ghost. I believe that in this company of saints, all things are common, and that one bears the burden of the other. I believe that the remission of sins is nowhere to be found but among that company of saints. I believe also, that no works, however great and splendid they may be, can profit anything toward the remission of sins, if you are not found in this company. I believe that there will be a resurrection of the dead; in which this same Holy Ghost will raise up all flesh, that is, all men according to the body and flesh, both godly and ungodly. I believe that after that resurrection there will be an eternal life of the righteous, and an eternal death of the wicked.

To Thine almighty Spirit be
Immortal glory given,
Whose teachings bring us near to Thee,
And train us up for heaven.

November 28

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name; Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

* * *

When the disciples of Christ asked that He would teach them how to pray, He said: "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Then He taught them this prayer, called the Lord's Prayer, which we shall consider in the following exercises, treating each petition separately. From this prayer we learn how to pray and for what we ought to pray. We should pray in few words, but with true and deep feeling and sensation. To pray with a few words and with a deep sensation is to pray as a Christian. Jesus has said: "The true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." The prayer "in spirit" is here mentioned in contradistinction to that which is bodily only, and the prayer "in truth" to that which is only in feigned words. The spiritual prayer is that inward desire, groaning, and expectation which proceed from the heart. It is the internal truth expressed outwardly, and shining forth in the external form. Concerning the words in which we ought to pray, as this prayer has its origin from Christ, it ought undoubtedly to be considered the greatest, most excellent, and best of all prayers; for if that most perfect Master had known any prayer that was better, He certainly would have taught it us.

O Thou, by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod—
Lord, teach us how to pray!

November 29

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven.

* * *

This certainly is a most excellent beginning or preparation, whereby we are led to know how He to whom we are about to pray should be named, honored, and addressed, and how every person should approach Him, that He may be gracious and inclined to hear. By these words we plainly show our miserable straits of mind, and our exiled state, and are powerfully moved to pray, as well as God to hear. For he who begins to pray: "Our Father who art in heaven," and does it from the inmost recesses of his heart, therein confesses that he has a Father, and that it is He who is in heaven; and he confesses also that he himself is an exile, and left to travel here upon earth. Then there must of necessity follow an inward affection of the heart, such as that son has who is living far from his own country among strangers, and in exile and calamity. He, therefore, who thus prays, has his heart directed and lifted up toward God, and is in a state to pray and to obtain grace of God. The use of this name therefore evidences great confidence in God, which confidence in Him we ought above all things to hold fast. And finally, we should observe how carefully Christ ordered this prayer: He did not will that any should pray for himself only, but for all men, for He did not teach us to say: "My Father," but "Our Father." Prayer is a spiritual and common blessing of which no one ought to be deprived, not even an enemy. For as God is the Father of us all, His will is that we should be as brethren, live together in love and friendship, and pray for each other as for ourselves.

Our Father, Thou in heaven above,
Who biddest us to dwell in love,
As brothers of one family,
And cry for all we need to Thee:
Teach us to mean the words we say,
And from the inmost heart to pray.

November 30

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Hallowed be Thy Name.

* * *

O great and inconceivably deep petition, when it proceeds from the true affection of the heart! The name of God is holy in itself, and cannot be made more holy by us: rather it is the same name that sanctifies all things and us also; yet, His name ought to be sanctified by us, that God might be made all in all, and man himself reduced to nothing. When that is done, all things are done rightly. We Christians are regenerated and made the sons of God. If, therefore, we follow on after the divine perfection of our Father, His name and blessings will be given unto us for an everlasting inheritance. God is just, pure, true, firm, simple, upright, wise, etc. Since, therefore, we are baptized, consecrated, and sanctified in this name, and as this name is now made our own name, it follows that all the sons of God are, and ought to be called, kind, merciful, chaste, just, true, simple, benevolent, peaceable, and sweetly affectionate in heart towards all men, even towards those who are their enemies, for the name of God in which they are baptized exercises all these virtues in them. Such ought to pray unceasingly that the name of God may be thus in them, work in them, and be sanctified in them. By this petition, therefore, is meant nothing else than that the honor of God should be sought before all things, above all things, and in all things, and that the whole of our life should be directed continually and only unto the honor of God, and not unto our advantage and salvation, nor unto any other good, either temporal or eternal, but only unto the honor and glory of God as its ultimate object.

Thy name be hallowed! help us Lord,
To keep in purity Thy Word,
And lead according to Thy name
A holy life untouched by blame;
Let no false teachings do us hurt,
All poor deluded souls convert.

December 1

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Thy kingdom come.

* * *

The second petition, like all the rest, does two things: it humbles and it lifts up. It humbles us, in that it forces us to confess with our own mouths the dreadful calamity of our exiled state. But it lifts us up, in that it instructs us how to conduct ourselves in this our humiliation. In the first place, it humbles us that we may fully know that the kingdom of God is not yet come unto us, that we are driven into an exiled state, and are still living among fearful enemies and deprived of the best of all countries. Thus God the Father is robbed of His kingdom in us. He who is, and will be Lord of all things, does not, through the impediment of our sin, enjoy as He ought to do this part of His power and glory, which hindrance of sin does not in a small degree dishonor Him. And we lie as strangers and exiles in captivity among the most numerous and dreadful enemies, in which state each one's life, if we could see all things as they really are, may justly be a greater cause of terror than a thousand deaths. In the second place, after this deep reflection shall have humbled us, and shall have truly shown us our calamity, then follows the consolation, which lies in our kind Master, Christ, having taught us to pray, that we might be delivered out of this exiled state and that we might not despair. For those who know and feel that they have thrown hindrance in the way of the kingdom of God, and who in sorrow and distress pray that that kingdom might at length come unto them, to such, because they thus grieve and pray, God will not impute this their sin, which otherwise He might justly punish.

Thy kingdom come! Thine let it be
In time, and through eternity!
O let Thy Holy Spirit dwell
With us to rule and guide us well;
From Satan's mighty power and rage
Preserve Thy Church from age to age.

December 2

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

* * *

This petition also humbles and lifts up: it manifests the ungodly and makes the godly. For the Word of God at all times works both judgment and righteousness. Judgment is nothing else than a man's knowing, judging, and condemning himself. And righteousness is nothing else than a man's truly desiring and seeking (after having been thus brought to a knowledge of himself) the grace and help of God. We see then, first, that we judge and condemn ourselves by our own words, and confess that we are disobedient unto God, and do not His will. For if we are in that state that we did the good will of God, this petition would be given us in vain. And since this prayer is to be used by us even unto the very end of our lives, it follows that we are found, even unto our death, to be transgressors of the divine will, for which we may justly, should God judge us according to the strictness of His judgment, be reprobated and damned every moment of our life. And secondly, we see what righteousness is—that after we have in this manner deeply examined and judged ourselves, we should not despair on account of the judgment of God (which we find by this petition that we justly deserve) but rather flee unto the grace of God and most firmly believe and trust in Him, that His will is to deliver us from disobedience and the transgression of His will. For he is righteous before God who humbly acknowledges that his rebellion and transgression have merited the strictest judgment of God, and who on that account seeks grace with all his heart, and doubts not that he shall receive it.

Thy will be done on earth, O Lord,
As where in heaven Thou art adored!
Patience in time of grief bestow,
Obedience in weal and woe;
Our sinful flesh and blood control
That thwart Thy will within the soul.

December 3

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Give us this day our daily bread.

* * *

Here, now, we consider the poor bread-basket, the necessaries of our body and of the temporal life. It is a brief and simple word, but it has a very wide scope. For when you mention and pray for daily bread, you pray for everything that is necessary in order to have and enjoy daily bread; and, on the other hand, against everything that interferes with it. Therefore you must open wide and extend your thoughts not only to the oven or the flour-bin, but to the distant field and the entire land, which bears and brings to us daily bread and every sort of sustenance. For if God did not cause it to grow, and bless and preserve it in the field, we could never take bread from the oven or have any to set upon the table. To comprise it briefly, this petition includes everything that belongs to our entire life in the world, because on that account alone do we need daily bread. Now for our life it is not only necessary that our body have food and covering and other necessaries, but also that we spend our days in peace and quiet among the people with whom we live and have intercourse in daily business and conversation and all sorts of doings—in short, whatever pertains both to the domestic and to the neighborly or civil relation and government. Behold, thus God wishes to indicate to us how He cares for us in all our needs, and faithfully provides also for our temporal support. And although He abundantly grants and preserves these things even to the wicked and knaves, yet He wishes that we pray for them, in order that we may recognize that we receive them from His hand, and may feel His paternal goodness towards us therein.

Give us this day our daily bread
And all that for this life we need;
From war and strife be our Defense,
From famine and from pestilence,
That we may live in godly peace,
Unvexed by cares and avarice.

December 4

THE LORD'S PRAYER

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

* * *

Being taught by grace, we are to be under the persuasion that every man is a sinner against God, and has also sinners against, or debtors to, himself. First, we are sinners against God, and that in great and damnable sins from which few of us are found to be free. And even if any one be of such moral goodness that he be not as yet polluted with these greater sins, yet he is still a debtor to God; for he does not fulfill the precepts of God nor does he show forth the least gratitude or thanks unto God for all the gifts and benefits that he has received above others. And therefore, if God should contend with him, that which Job said would be proved to be true, that "man cannot answer God one of a thousand" *(Job ix. 3)*. And hence it is humility alone that keeps even those safe who live under grace, whose own sins are not imputed unto them, because they judge and condemn themselves and supplicate for pardon, and mercifully pardon their debtors. Secondly, there are also debtors unto us. For thus does God permit, in His management of things, that some one or other should rise up who may trouble or injure our property, or fame, or anything else of the same kind belonging unto us; and thus does He give us an occasion for repenting of our sins and pardoning our debtors. And here, turn your judgment upon yourself and commune with your own heart. See who and what you are, and then you will forget all the evils of your neighbor, because you yourself will find both your hands full of, yea running over with, your own evils.

Lord, all our trespasses forgive,
That they our hearts no more may grieve,
As we forgive their trespasses
Who unto us have done amiss;
Thus let us dwell in charity,
And serve each other willingly.

December 5

THE LORD'S PRAYER

And lead us not into temptation.

* * *

From this short petition we again learn how miserable this life upon earth is, seeing that it is a state of temptation only. Even if we were all fired with the desire of peace, and all directed our efforts unto the attainment of it, it would be to no purpose: this life is a state of temptation, and so it will remain. Hence we do not say: "Take away temptation," but "Lead us not into temptation." Temptation is twofold. The one kind of temptation is from the left hand, which drives us on to wrath, hatred, bitterness, sloth, disgust, and impatience; and particularly so when we are in ill health or in poverty, when we are treated with disrespect, or when we are under any of those things which bring grief and distress to the mind. Then we are to pray: "O Father, this temptation comes upon me, I know, by Thy permission; send me help that it overcome me not nor draw me away." No one can be free from temptations, but a man may resist these evils and wisely escape them, though it must be by prayer and by imploring the divine aid only. The other kind of temptation is from the right hand, and drives us on to lust, pleasure, pride, avarice, and vainglory; in a word, to all those things which are sweet and pleasant to us. This temptation is the strongest, when any one is left to do without restraint whatever he pleases, according to the inclination of his will, when his words, opinions, and works are praised, when honor is paid him, and he is made of the greatest consequence. In conclusion, there is nothing we should so watch and guard against after God has forgiven us our trespasses as that we fall not again into the same filth.

Into temptation lead us not;
And when the Foe doth war and plot
Against our souls on every hand,
Then armed with faith, O may we stand
Against him as a valiant host,
Through comfort of the Holy Ghost.

December 6

THE LORD'S PRAYER

But deliver us from evil.

* * *

Here note carefully that it is *at the end* that we avert by this prayer, and are taught to avert, the evils themselves. We may beg of God that these evils may be averted, yet the petition must be in its due order, and in the last place. There are not a few who honor God and pray unto Him only that they may be delivered from evil; that is all they seek after. Such never think anything about the first petition, that they are to prefer the honor, name and will of God to everything else. They seek their own will only, they want to be delivered from their troubles whether God will or no, and whether it is to His honor or not. Whereas a truly God-fearing man prays thus: "O dearest Father, the affliction of this evil that is come upon me burdens and distresses me much, and I suffer much adversity and disquietude of mind. Deliver Thou me therefore from these evils, and yet, in no other way than in that which may redound to Thy glory, honor, and praise: not my will, but Thine be done. For the honor and will of Thy divine Majesty are dearer to me than all my own peace or advantage, either temporal or eternal." This is a consistent and right prayer, which will without doubt be heard in heaven; but if we pray in any other way, or from any other motives, such a prayer will neither please God nor be heard at all. We ought to pray to be delivered from evil to that end, that the will of God may be done, and that His kingdom may come, unto the praise and glory of His holy name.

From evil, Lord, deliver us!
The times and days are perilous;
Redeem us from eternal death;
And when we yield our dying breath,
Console us, grant us calm release,
And take our souls to Thee in peace.

December 7

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Amen!

* * *

The word *Amen* signifies "certainly" or "truly." It is a term worthy of particular notice, because it is expressive of faith, which faith it is necessary that we have in all our petitions, for Christ said: "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" *(Mark xi. 24)*. He that is about to pray ought to try and examine himself whether he believes or doubts that he shall be heard. For how shall it please God, who has most certainly promised us that we shall receive whatsoever we shall ask in prayer, if we by our unbelief make Him a liar, and, in the whole of our prayer act within against the prayer itself. Amen therefore is a term expressing a solid soul-faith. It is as if one would say: "I do not doubt, O divine Father, that that for which I have prayed will be done and accomplished, because Thou hast commanded that they should be prayed for, and hast promised that Thou wilt bestow them. Therefore it is not the worthiness of my prayer, but the full persuasion of the truth that makes me to believe and to be persuaded beyond all doubt that all is and will be, Amen." All prayer must firmly rest upon the truth and promise of God, for if God had not commanded us to pray, and had not promised beforehand that He would hear us, all creatures together could not obtain one single grain of profit by all their prayers, however urgent they might be. It is the Word of God and His promise, and not our devotion, that makes the prayer good. In such a right prayer our faith rests upon the Word of God, and the state of mind is right.

Amen! that is, so let it be!
Confirm our faith continually,
That we may doubt not, but believe
That what we ask we shall receive;
Thus in Thy name and at Thy Word
We say: Amen; O hear us, Lord!

December 8

> I have refrained my feet from every evil way that I might keep Thy Word. I have not departed from Thy judgments: for Thou hast taught me. *Ps. cxix. 101, 102.*

* * *

When Bullinger once remarked to Luther that those who attributed too much to the literal Word sinned against God and His almighty power as the Jews did in naming the ark God, Luther corrected him in the following manner: You err in that you cut asunder and separate the Word and the Spirit; you separate those that preach and teach the Word from God who works the same; you also separate the ministers who baptize from God who commands it; and you think that the Holy Ghost is given and works without the Word, which Word, you say, is an external sign and mark that finds the Spirit of which the heart is already in possession. According to your false opinion, if the Word does not find the Spirit, but is heard by an ungodly person, then it is not God's Word, and thus you define the Word not according to God who speaks it, but according as people entertain and receive it. You will only grant that such is God's Word which purifies and brings peace and life; but when it does not work in the ungodly, then it is not God's Word. You will not yield that God's Word is the instrument through which the Holy Ghost works and accomplishes His work and prepares a beginning to righteousness or justification. But I say, teach, and acknowledge that the Word, whether it produces fruit or not, is, nevertheless, God's strength, which saves all that believe.

> It (the Word) is the power of God to save
> From sin and Satan and the grave;
> It works the faith which firmly clings
> To all the treasures which it brings.

December 9

> Thou has trodden down all them that err from Thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love Thy testimonies. *Ps. cxix. 118, 119.*

* * *

I have lived to see the greatest plague on earth; namely, the contemning of God's Word, which is so great and fearful that it surpasses all other plagues in the world; for thereupon must surely follow all manner of eternal and corporal punishments. If I intended to wish to one all bitter plagues and curses, I would wish him the contemning of God's Word, for then he would have them all at once, both inward and outward misfortunes, and what afterwards will follow they shall know to their sorrow. The contemning of God's Word is the forerunner and messenger of God's punishments, as we witness from the examples of Lot, Noah, and of our Savior Jesus Christ. Those who will acknowledge that the writings of the Evangelists are God's Word we are willing to encounter with dispute, but with him who denies the same, we refuse to exchange even a word, also with one who rejects the first principles. Some are of the opinion that the first book among the five books of Moses was not written by Moses himself. But what if Moses did not write that book? It is nevertheless Moses' book. Such and other cold and fruitless opinions and questions we should reject; we should not hearken unto them but rather shun them.

Those haughty spirits, Lord, restrain,
Who o'er Thy Church with might would reign,
And always set forth something new,
Devised to change Thy doctrine true.

December 10

They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from Thy Law. Thou art near, O Lord; and all Thy Commandments are truth. *Ps. cxix. 150, 151.*

* * *

Dr. Justus Jonas told Dr. Martin Luther of a noble and powerful Misnian, who above all things occupied himself in amassing gold and silver, and was so buried in darkness, that he gave no heed to the five books of Moses, and had even said to Duke John Frederic, who was discoursing with him upon the Gospel: "Sir, the Gospel pays no interest." "Have you no grains?" interposed Luther, and then told this fable: A lion making a great feast, invited all the beasts, and with them some swine. When all manner of dainties were set before the guests, the swine asked: "Have you no grains?" Even so in these days, continued the doctor, it is with our epicureans. We preachers set before them the most dainty and costly dishes, as everlasting salvation, the remission of sins, and God's grace; but they, like swine, turn up their snouts, and ask for guilders; offer a cow nutmeg, and she will reject it for old hay. This reminds me of the answer of certain parishioners to their minister, who had been earnestly exhorting them to come and listen to the Word of God. "Well," said they, "if you will tap a good barrel of beer for us, we'll come with all our hearts and hear you." The Gospel at Wittenberg is like unto the rain which, falling upon a river, produces little effect; but descending upon a dry, thirsty soil, renders it fertile.

Bread of our souls, whereon we feed,
True manna from on high;
Our guide and chart, wherein we read
Of realms beyond the sky:
Lord, grant us all aright to learn
The wisdom it imparts;
And to its heavenly teaching turn,
With simple, childlike hearts.

December 11

The wicked have waited for me, to destroy me: but I will consider Thy testimonies. I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceeding broad. *Ps. cxix. 95, 96.*

* * *

The great unthankfulness, contempt of God's World, and wilfulness of the world, make me fear that the divine light will soon cease to shine on man, for God's Word has ever had its certain course. Even in the time of the Apostles, there were heresies, errors, and evil doctrines spread abroad by false brethren. Next came Arius, and the Word of God was hidden behind dark clouds, but the holy fathers, Ambrose, Hilary, Augustine, Athanasius, and others, dispersed the obscurity. Greece and many other countries have heard the Word of God, but have since abandoned it, and it is to be feared even now it may quit Germany, and go into other lands. I hope the last day will not be long delayed. The darkness grows thicker around us, and godly servants of the Most High become scarcer every day. Impiety and licentiousness are rampant throughout the world; men live like pigs, like wild beasts, devoid of all reason. But a voice will soon be heard thundering forth: Behold, the bridegroom cometh. God will not be able to bear this wicked world much longer, but will come, with the dreadful day, and chastise the scorners of His Word.

O grant that in Thy holy Word
We here may live and die, dear Lord;
And when our journey endeth here,
Receive us into glory there.

December 12

> Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are rejoicing of my heart. . . . Thou hast trodden down all them that err from Thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. *Ps. cxix. 111, 118.*

* * *

I have grounded my preaching upon the literal Word; he that pleases may follow me, he that will not may stay. I call upon St. Peter, St. Paul, Moses, and all the saints, to say whether they ever fundamentally comprehended one single Word of God, without studying it over and over and over again. The Psalm says: His understanding is infinite. The saints, indeed, know God's Word, and can discourse of it, but the practice is another matter; therein we shall ever remain scholars. Here a fine similitude may be used: it is as with a sphere or globe, which, lying upon a table, touches it only with one point, yet it is the whole table which supports the globe. Though I am an old doctor of divinity, to this day I have not gotten beyond the children's learning—the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. I do not understand these so well as I should, though I study them daily. If I thoroughly appreciated these first words of the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father, which art in heaven," and really believed that God, who made heaven and earth, and all creatures, and has all things in His hand, is my Father, then I would certainly conclude that I also am a lord of heaven and earth, and that all the angels are my attendants, given unto me by my Heavenly Father, to keep me in the path, lest unawares I knock my foot against a stone.

Thy Word is everlasting truth:
How pure is every page!
That holy Book shall guide our youth,
And well support our age.

December 13

I hate vain thoughts: but Thy Law do I love. Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Thy Word. *Ps. cxix. 113, 114.*

* * *

The Holy Scriptures surpass in efficaciousness all the arts and all the sciences of the philosophers and jurists; these, though good and necessary to life here below, are vain and of no effect as to what concerns the life eternal. The Bible should be regarded with wholly different eyes from those with which we view other productions. He who wholly renounces himself, and relies not on mere human reason, will make good progress in the Scriptures; but the world comprehends them not, from ignorance. Can he who understands not God's Word understand God's works? We have a picture of the world and God's Church, which shows how things go. The ungodly Cain was a great lord in the world, while Abel, that upright and pious man, was an outcast, subject and oppressed. But before God the case was quite contrary: Cain was rejected of God, Abel accepted and received as God's beloved child. Ishmael's was also a fair name, "hearer of God," while Isaac's was naught. Esau's name means "actor," "the man that shall do the work," Jacob's was naught. The name Absalom signifies "the father of peace." Such fair and glorious colors do the ungodly ever bear in this world, while in truth and deed they are contemners, scoffers and rebels against the Word of God. But by that Word, God be praised, we are able to discern and know all such; therefore let us hold the Bible in precious esteem, and diligently read it.

How precious is the Book divine,
By inspiration given;
Bright as a lamp its doctrines shine,
To guide our souls to heaven.

December 14

How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. *Ps. cxix. 103, 104.*

* * *

The Holy Scriptures are such wisdom that we must continually remain scholars therein, for we cannot sufficiently sound out the depth of one Word in them. When we think we understand much therein, we have scarcely learned the a b c. Who is able to know himself? As we see and learn how badly man's heart is spoiled and poisoned by original sin, which is deeply rooted in us, so likewise we find God's will far deeper than that we with our five senses can comprehend it. To the understanding of the worldly wise there is no lighter nor more easy art than Divinity and to understand God's Word; but they shoot far from the mark. The cause which makes people think that Divinity is so easy and light is this, that they soon weary of the same and are quickly filled therewith. The wise of the world, and the great ones, understand not God's Word: but God has revealed it to the poor, contemned, simple people, as our Savior witnesses: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." St. Gregory says well and right that the Holy Scripture is like a water, wherein an elephant swims, but a little sheep goes therein upon his feet. No greater mischief can ever happen to Christian people than when God's Word is taken from them and falsified, that they do not retain it pure and clear. God grant that we and ours may not live to see such mischief take effect.

Lord, open Thou my heart to hear,
And by Thy Word to me draw near,
Let me Thy Word still pure retain,
Let me Thy child and heir remain.

December 15

> I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients; because I keep Thy precepts. *Ps. cxix. 99, 100.*

* * *

He who has made himself master of the principles and text of the Word runs little risk of committing errors. A theologian should be thoroughly in possession of the basis and source of faith, that is to say, the Holy Scriptures. Armed with this knowledge it was that I confounded and silenced all my adversaries; for they seek not to fathom and understand the Scriptures; they run them over negligently and drowsily; they speak, they write, they teach, according to the suggestion of their heedless imaginations. My counsel is, that we draw water from the true source and foundation, that is, that we diligently search the Scriptures. He who wholly possesses the text of the Bible, is a consummate divine. One single verse, one sentence of the text, is of far more instruction than a whole host of glosses and commentaries, which are neither strongly penetrating nor armor of defense. As, when I have that text before me of St. Paul: "All the creatures of God are good, if they be received with thanksgiving," this text shows that what God has made is good. Now eating, drinking, marrying, etc., are of God's making, therefore they are good. Yet the glosses of the primitive fathers are against this text: for Bernard, Basil, Jerome, and others, have written to far other purpose. But I prefer the text to them all, though, in popedom, the glosses were deemed of higher value than the bright and clear text.

Divine Instructor, gracious Lord!
Be Thou forever near;
Teach me to love Thy sacred Word,
And view My Savior there.

December 16

Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee. Blessed art Thou, O Lord: teach me Thy statutes. *Ps. cxix. 11, 12.*

* * *

The Bible, or Holy Scripture, is like a fair and spacious orchard, wherein all sorts of trees do grow, from which we may pluck divers kinds of fruits; for in the Bible we have rich and precious comforts, learnings, admonitions, warnings, promises, threatenings, etc. The Holy Scripture is full of divine gifts and virtues. The books of the heathen taught nothing of Faith, Hope, and Love; nay, they knew nothing at all of the same; their books aimed only at that which was present, at that which, with natural wit and understanding, a human creature was able to comprehend and take hold of; but to trust in God and hope in the Lord, nothing was written thereof in their books. In the Psalms and in Job we may see and find how those two books do treat and handle of Faith, of Hope, of Patience, and Prayer. To be short, the Holy Scripture is the best and the highest book of God, full of comfort in all manner of trials and temptations; for it teaches of Faith, Hope, and Love, far otherwise than human reason and understanding can comprehend. And, in times of troubles and vexations, it teaches how these virtues should light and shine; it teaches also, that after this poor and miserable life, there is another which is eternal and everlasting.

This lamp, through all the tedious night
Till we behold the clearer light
Of an eternal day.
Of life, shall guide our way,

December 17

> Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. . . . Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. *Ps. cxix. 105, 111.*

* * *

That the Bible is the Word of God, the same I prove, as follows. All things that have been and now are in the world, also how things now stand and transpire in the world, the same was written altogether particularly at the beginning, in the first Book of Moses concerning the Creation. And even as God made and created it, even so it was, and even so it stands to this present day. And although King Alexander the Great, the kingdom of Egypt, the empire of Babel, the Persian, Grecian, and Roman monarchs, the Emperors Julius and Augustus, most fiercely raged and swelled against this book, utterly to suppress and destroy the same; yet notwithstanding, they could prevail nothing: they are all gone and vanished; but this Book, from time to time, has remained, and will remain unmoved, in full and ample manner, as it was written at the first. But who kept and preserved it from such great and raging power, or who defends it still? Truly no human creature, but only God Himself, who is the right Master thereof; and it is a great wonder that it has been so long kept and preserved, for the devil and the world are great enemies unto it. The devil (doubtless) has destroyed many good books in the Church, as he has rooted out and slain many saints, concerning whom we have now no knowledge. But the Bible he has left untouched. Homer, Virgil, and others like them, are profitable and ancient books, but in comparison with the Bible, they are as nothing.

> But still Thy Law and Gospel, Lord,
> Have lessons more divine;
> Not earth stands firmer than Thy Word,
> Nor stars so nobly shine.

December 18

O how love I Thy Law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou, through Thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. *Ps. cxix. 97, 98.*

* * *

The chief lesson and study in Divinity is well and rightly to learn to know Christ, for He is therein very graciously and kindly pictured to us. Therefore St. Peter says: Grow up in the knowledge of Christ. And Christ himself also teaches that we should learn to know Him only out of the Scriptures, when He says: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." We ought not to measure, censure, and understand the Scriptures according to our own natural sense and reason, but we ought diligently by prayer to meditate therein, and to search after the same. The devil and temptations also do give occasion unto us somewhat to learn and understand the Scriptures by experience and practice. Without trials and temptations we should never understand anything thereof; no, not although we diligently read and heard the same. The Holy Ghost must be the only Master and Tutor to teach us therein, and let youth and scholars not be ashamed to learn of this Tutor. When I find myself in temptation, then I quickly lay hold of and fasten on some text in the Bible which Christ Jesus lays before me; namely, that He died for me, from whence I have and receive comfort.

Divine Instructor, gracious Lord!
Be Thou forever near;
Teach me to love Thy sacred Word,
And view my Savior there.

December 19

> For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. *Isa. lv. 8, 9.*

* * *

The cause why God passed so sharp a sentence against Adam, was that he had eaten of the forbidden tree, and was disobedient unto God; insomuch that for his sake the ground was cursed, and also the whole generation of mankind was made subject to all manner of miseries, and finally, death sent upon us all. The sense and reason of the worldly-wise, who only look upon the biting of the apple, consider that a slight and trivial thing, and that God brought too cruel and hard a proceeding against poor Adam. Again, these worldlings stumble and are offended at this; namely, that Christ, as they think, despises and rejects good, honest, and holy people. He sends them away from Him, and calls them malefactors; notwithstanding some in His name have prophesied, have cast out devils, and have done miracles. On the contrary He receives public sinners, if they hear His Word and believe in Him; He forgives their sins; yea, He makes them righteous and holy, God's children and heirs of everlasting life and salvation, out of pure grace and mercy, without any of their good works. Human reason, wisdom, and understanding cannot comprehend God in His majesty; therefore we must neither seek nor search out what God's will, His substance, and nature is, anywhere but in His Word.

> How most exact is nature's frame!
> How wise th' eternal Mind!
> His counsels never change the scheme
> That His first thoughts designed.

December 20

> For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth His children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. *Ps. ciii. 11-13.*

* * *

Seeing that heaven is God's stool, as Isaiah writers, therefore He can reach far, far above heaven; and that the earth is His footstool, therefore He must needs be in the whole world, as the following words show: "Where is the place of My rest? For all these things hath Mine hand made, and all these things have been, but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word." As if God would say: They who tremble at My Word, they are the ones in whom I will have My rest and dwelling; but now these are scattered here and there in the whole world. And if He fills all things, then surely He must needs be everywhere, spiritually in His Word and Sacraments. Therefore He that will be wise before God, let Him learn God's Word, and stand in fear of Him, for "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Yet let him fear so that he also hope in His goodness. If any man will ask why God permits that men be hardened and fall into everlasting perdition, let him ask again, why God did not spare His only Son, but gave Him for us all to die the most contemned death of the cross? This is a more certain sign of His love for us poor people than of His wrath and anger against us. Such questions cannot be better solved and answered than by the like contrary questions. Let us therefore accept His good will and not speculate concerning His Words and works.

> To fear Thy power, to trust Thy grace,
> Is our divinest skill;
> And he's the wisest of our race,
> Who best obeys Thy will.

December 21

All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. *Matt. xxviii. 18.*

* * *

The Holy Scripture (especially St. Paul) ascribes to Christ the same almighty power which is given to the Father; so that He can give grace, peace of conscience, forgiveness of sins, life, victory over death and the devil. Now, unless St. Paul wanted to rob God of His honor and give it to another that was not God, he would not ascribe such properties and attributes unto Christ, if He were not true God. And God Himself says: "I will not give My glory to another." And indeed, no man can give that to another which he does not himself possess: but seeing Christ gives grace, peace, the Holy Ghost also, and redeems from the power of the devil, from sin and death, it is most sure that He has an endless immeasurable, almighty power equal with the Father's. Christ brings peace, not as the Apostles brought it; namely, through preaching, but He gives it as Creator to His creature. The Father creates, gives life, grace and peace, and even so the Son gives the same gifts. Now, to give grace, peace, everlasting life, forgiveness of sins, to deliver from death and hell, surely these are not the works of any creature, but the sole majesty of God. We must think of no other God than of Christ; that God which does not speak out of Christ's mouth is not God. God will hear no human creature except through Christ.

All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.

December 22

This is the true God and eternal life. *I John v. 20.*

* * *

That Christ, the Son of the Virgin Mary, is true God, the Scriptures fully witness, especially in the Gospel of the holy Evangelist John. All sentences in the Scriptures which speak of faith in Christ clearly show that He is true God; otherwise it were idolatry and against the First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me," to believe in Christ; for God gives His honor to no other *(Isa. xlii. 8)*. This article, that Christ is true God, is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, through sure and strong witnesses, especially in the New Testament, where Christ is often named God with clear and express words: as "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" *(John i. 1)*. And John xx., where the Apostle Thomas calls Christ God, saying: "My Lord, and my God." In like manner Paul speaks of Christ as God, when he says: "Who is over all, God blessed forever." And Col. ii.: "In Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." If Christ is not God, then neither the Father, nor the Holy Ghost is God; for our article of faith speaks thus: "Christ is God, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost." Therefore when I hear Christ say: "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest," I believe steadfastly that the whole Godhead speaks to me.

Thou art the Way: to Thee alone
From sin and death we flee,
And he who would the Father seek,
Must seek Him, Lord, by Thee.

December 23

> All men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him. *John v. 23.*

* * *

Whoever falls from the profession of the Gospel to the Law, and expects to be saved by good works, falls from the true service of God to idolatry; for without Christ there is nothing but idolatry, and altogether feigned imaginations of God. Idolatry is plainly this: When things are not done according to God's Word, for when a man wishes to serve God, he must not look upon that which he does, nor upon his work, but he must consider how it ought to be done, and whether God has commanded it or not, as God says to Saul (speaking through Samuel): "Obedience is better than sacrifice." Therefore, whoever does not hearken to God's voice is an idolater, although he perform the highest and greatest service of God. It is the nature of idolatry to choose not that which is esteemed easy and light, but that which is heavy and burdensome, as the monks chose, who almost every day devised new worshiping of God; but which, because God did not command the same, was idolatry. Moreover, all blaspheming, contemning of God's Word, covetousness, wrong, force, etc., and the like, are mere idolatry. And if God with horrible severity punishes the wrong which is done our neighbor, as we see in the Prophets, how much more and harder will He punish when He sees that by ungodly people His honor is stained, false doctrine and worshiping?

> Jesus! and shall it ever be,
> A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
> Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise,
> Whose glories shine through endless days?

December 24

And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?
II Sam. vii. 19.

* * *

That Christ is God and man, the same is above human reason and understanding. For when we are to bring the two natures in Christ (the divine and human) into one person, then human wisdom, reason, and understanding are startled, and say: How can this be? We do not understand it. But it is not written that you should understand and comprehend it with your natural sense and wisdom, but you must yield yourself captive and believe the Word of the Gospel through the operation of the Holy Ghost, and give God the honor that is due Him, that He is true and cannot lie. St. Paul says: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him . . . . For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ" *(I Cor. ii. 14, 16)*. And Christ says: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you" *(John xvi. 23)*. "And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive *(Matt. xxi. 22)*. "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" *(Mark xi. 24)*. Here Christ speaks as one who has all in His power, who can give everything which a man prays for in faith.

The everlasting Son
Incarnate deigns to be;
Himself a servant's form puts on,
To set His people free.

December 25

> Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. *Luke ii. 10, 11.*

* * *

On this day, Christ, our Lord and Savior, was conceived by the Holy Ghost in the pure and chaste body of the Virgin Mary, took upon Him the nature of man, became our brother, placed us poor vile wretches in the highest honor, so high that we are now God's children and co-heirs with Christ, for which we ought to rejoice more than for all the treasures of this earth. To dispute about how it came to pass that He, who fills heaven and earth, and whom neither earth nor heaven is able to comprehend, was inclosed in the pure body of His mother, hinders this joy and gives occasion to doubt. We Christians ought to be glad and joyful for the great and high honor which on this day was done to us, that the Son of God took on Himself, not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. This article of Christ's humanity is most sure and certain, and nothing is a greater help in high spiritual temptations than this comfort, that Christ, the true everlasting God, is our flesh and bone, as St. Paul says: "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones," and He sits at the right hand of God and makes intercession for us. With this shield of faith we can drive away that wicked one with all his fiery darts.

To you this night is born a Child
Of Mary, chosen virgin mild;
This little Child, of lowly birth,
Shall be the joy of all the earth.

December 26

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. *Acts iv. 12.*

* * *

Let us fix and repose all our trust and confidence in Christ Jesus. Let it please the Lord to take me out of this life this hour, or on the morrow, or whenever He may choose, I acknowledge and wish to continue to acknowledge Jesus Christ for my Lord and my God. I am not taught this in the Scriptures only, that I ought to acknowledge Jesus as my Lord and God, but my great and manifold experiences have confirmed this knowledge; for the name Jesus has often helped me when no creature whatever could help or comfort me. In this manner I have before me the Word and the deed, Scripture and experience; the loving Lord has given them both richly unto me. I have endured many trials and temptations, but they were all necessary and good for me. The spiritual trials teach wherein Christ is profitable; and those experiences certainly make me to firmly believe that the Holy Scripture is the infallible Word of God, and has made that sentence in Scripture most sure to me, where our Savior says: "Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost" *(John xvii. 12).* Also: "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" *(John vi. 37).*

I know that my Redeemer lives!
What comfort this sweet sentence gives,
He lives, He lives, who once was dead,
He lives, my ever-living Head.

December 27

> For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. *I Cor. i. 21.*

* * *

All the wisdom of the world is merely childishness, yea, foolishness, in comparison with the divine knowledge of Christ. For what is more wonderful than to know and to acknowledge the great unspeakable mystery, that the Son of God, the image of the eternal Father, has taken upon Him the nature of man. Many fables have been imagined of the childhood and infancy of Christ, our Savior, but this is a most necessary point, that with great diligence we ought to seek to know Christ: that the everlasting God has abased Himself so meanly, was born so poor and miserable, and has done the same for the sake of our sins. Soon after He was born, Joseph was constrained with His mother and child to flee into Egypt, because of Herod, who sought to kill the child. And when, after Herod's death, they returned to Nazareth, Jesus was obedient to His parents. Whoever does not take offense at this simple and mean course of life which was seen in Jesus, the same is endued with a high, divine art and wisdom, yea, he has a special gift of God, and it is the work of the Holy Ghost. Our blessed Savior did humble and abase Himself, and was obedient to the most contemptible death of the cross, for the comfort of poor, miserable, sinful mankind. Should He not be esteemed, extolled, and praised?

Hail Him, ye heirs of David's line,
Whom David Lord did call;
The God incarnate, Man divine:
And crown Him Lord of all.

December 28

For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. *I Tim. ii. 5.*

* * *

Christ, our Highpriest, is ascended up into heaven, sits on the right hand of God the Father, and, without ceasing, makes intercession for us. Here Paul in glowing terms pictures Christ before us: In His death He is a Sacrifice offered up for our sins, in His resurrection He is a Conqueror, in His ascension a King, in making mediation and intercession He is an Highpriest. Christ will remain a Priest and a King, for He was ordained and consecrated by God Himself, and by Him was anointed, as it is written: "The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek." And the second Psalm says: "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." Therefore He will surely remain, and all that believe in Him. God says: "Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek," for He is faithful and true, and loves us more than His own life, which He showed by His bitter passion and death. Oh, how happy and blessed is the man who can believe this from his heart! God declares to us that Christ shall be our Bishop and Highpriest, who, without ceasing, shall make intercession for those that are His. It is indeed a great and a glorious comfort to know and to believe that Christ our Highpriest sits at the right hand of God and prays and mediates for us without ceasing.

He lives, my kind, wise, heavenly Friend,
He lives and loves me to the end;
He lives, and while He lives, I'll sing;
He lives, my Prophet, Priest, and King!

December 29

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. *Ps. cx. 1.*

* * *

At times it seems as if Christ did not intercede for His poor troubled and persecuted members, for the world rewards God's best and truest servants very ill; they persecute, they condemn and kill them as the most wicked, mischievous heretics and malefactors, and Christ suffers the same to be done. But the Scripture in many places names Christ our Priest, Bridegroom, etc., and it calls us who believe in Him His bride, virgin, daughter, etc. This is a picture which we should always have before our eyes. For first, He has manifested His office of priesthood in this, that He has preached and made known and revealed His Father's will to us; namely, that whosoever believes in His Son has everlasting life. Secondly, Christ has also prayed, and will pray for us Christians as long as the world endures, which He tells us when He says: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word" *(John xvii. 20).* And thirdly, He has offered up His body for our sins upon the tree of the cross. He is our Bridegroom, and we are His bride. What He, the loving Savior Christ has, yea, He Himself is ours, for we are members of His body, of His flesh and bone, as St. Paul says.

Who is the King of glory, who?
The Lord, that all His foes o'ercame,
The world, sin, death, and hell o'erthrew;
And Jesus is the Conqueror's name.

December 30

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Matt. xxviii. 19.*

* * *

In the Gospel of St. John, chapter 3, we are plainly shown the difference between the divine persons in the greatest work that God accomplishes with us poor human creatures, in that He justifies and saves us; for there it is plainly written of the Father: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" *(John iii. 16)*. The Father loves the world and gives unto it His Son. The Son suffers Himself to be given to the world, and, as Christ clearly says, He suffered Himself to be lifted up on the cross as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. To this work comes afterward the Holy Ghost, the Third Person, who kindles true faith in the heart through the Word, and so regenerates us and makes us the children of God. Christ is true God with the Father, and the Holy Ghost is true God; and yet there are not three Gods, nor three substances. There is but one divine essence in three Persons. Whether this article seems strange or not, we believe it, because it is grounded on God's Word. The one true God is the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy name, in earth,
and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty!
God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!

December 31

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. *Eph. vi. 10.*

* * *

The life of a human creature is a warfare upon earth. A Christian must be a soldier, ever striving and fighting with the enemy. St. Paul describes the weapons of a Christian *(Eph. vi.)*. *Firstly*, the girdle of truth: that is, the confession of the pure doctrine of the Gospel, which is upright, not an hypocritical or a feigned faith. *Secondly*, the breastplate of righteousness: the righteousness of faith, and of the remission of sins, the faith of which Moses speaks *(Gen. xv.)*: "And he (Abraham) believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." *Thirdly*, the shoes wherewith the feet are shod: the works of our calling; namely, the fruits of faith. *Fourthly*, the shield of faith: Christ Himself and His atoning blood, whom we must hold before the fiery darts of the enemy. *Fifthly*, the helmet of salvation: that is, the hope of everlasting life. *Sixthly*, the sword of the Spirit: that is, the Word of God and prayer, for as the lion is frightened at nothing more than the crowing of a cock, so the devil can be overcome and vanquished with nothing else than with the Word of God and prayer, and of this Christ Himself has given us an example.

From strength to strength go on,
Wrestle, and fight, and pray;
Tread all the powers of darkness down,
And win the well-fought day.

Still let the Spirit cry
In all His soldiers, "Come,"
Till Christ the Lord descends from high,
And takes the conquerors home.

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